

# MAGONIA 99

APRIL 2009

## CONTEMPORARY VISION AND BELIEF

### MERSEYSIDE UFO Bulletin

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DOUBTS ABOUT CONDON

THE ALMOSA CASE

LOCAL UFO REPORTS

LOCO HOLK

UNSETTLED UFOLOGISTS

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#### EDITORIAL

##### Aims and Policy

This new Bulletin is an informal publication which aims to stimulate local interest in the subject of unidentified flying objects and related phenomena.

In order to do this effectively we will need to exchange ideas and information with ufologists in other parts of Britain and in other countries. We will seek to do this by exchanging copies of this Bulletin for similar publications and by engaging in correspondence. Local readers are invited to assist by supplying information on significant local UFO reports and by offering to help the editors in the production of this Bulletin.

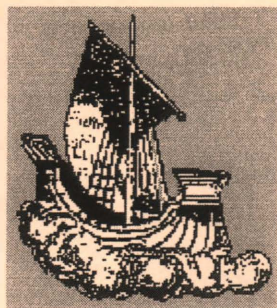
We will deal with all aspects of the subject, but in as objective a manner as is possible.

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The cover of the first issue of the magazine that became Magonia. Merseyside UFO Bulletin, edited and published by John Harney

THE  
LAST  
ISSUE





# MAGONIA 99

INCORPORATING MUFOB 144

**April 2009**

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Apart from the souvenir Magonia 100, which will be published later this year, this is the last Magonia print magazine. However, we are not disappearing altogether. The Magonia article internet archive is being built up at <http://magonia.haaan.com/> and already has nearly 250 articles, with more being added almost daily. It also has a facility for readers to comment and add to the articles. The Magonia Blog is at <http://pelicanist.blogspot.com/> and as well as general news and comment, it will host the Magonia Review of Books, an essential guide to literature. Here too, comments will be welcome.

## A FEW FINAL EDITORIAL NOTES

Well here it is. Welcome to Magonia 99, the last in the series which has survived in one form or another since 1968. Firstly as Merseyside UFO Bulletin, then simply as MUFOB when the editorial base moved from Merseyside, and finally as Magonia. Peter Rogerson outlines our history in more detail elsewhere in this issue, so I shall concentrate here on my reasons for ending the publication at this point.

Some of you may have seen my piece in the February 2009 issue of Fortean Times. (And may I add here how incredibly flattered I am by the editorial in that issue in which Bob Rickard describes Magonia as FT's "philosophical elder brother") In that column I expressed my disappointment and frustration that the whole field of UFO research seemed incapable of making any kind of progress, and that it has deteriorated into an endless scrutiny of issues that were once considered settled. Of course, in many cases the level of interest in a report or personality is not dependent of the level of scientific interest in the object, but the level of financial interest.

Over the past few months we've been subjected to a seemingly endless flow of low-grade UFO reports in the tabloids, most notably The Sun. It's disappointing, but hardly surprising that one of the figures boosting this process is the self-styled former 'Head of the British Government's UFO Project'.

What's even more disappointing, though, is the way the British 'UFO community' (OK, silly phrase, but it seems to be the contemporary usage!) has tagged along in its wake, with endless and fairly pointless discussion about whether or not a UFO knocked the blade of a wind generator. It didn't, OK? End of story.

At least the British UFO 'community' does operate with a considerable degree of scepticism and common-sense, unlike our transatlantic colleagues, who have invented a kind of ufological necrophilia, resurrecting cases which everyone thought were dead and buried decades ago. It's not just Roswell, of course, but just about every case from the 'fifties and 'sixties,

from Socorro to McMinnville is being revived with 'death-bed confessions' or vague hints of sinister government involvement.

Having said that, there is still a great deal of positive work being undertaken. It would have seemed impossible just a few years ago that British ufologists would be working in conjunction with a government agency to publicise Ministry of Defence records of UFO reports, yet this is what's happening now with David Clarke and The National Archives. The historical research which David, Andy Roberts and others are undertaking is providing valuable information on the social background to UFO belief and activism in Britain.

And certainly it is true to say that the entire ethos of ufology, in this country at least, has changed quite radically for the better since this magazine began its long march; and I think not overly egotistical to say to a considerable extent because of what we have done in Magonia. Much of this was through bringing the work of the French researchers of the 1980s to the attention of British readers.

Looking back over the early issues of MUFOB it is amusing to recall the endless battles with the old fossils who ran BUFORA and some of the other UFO organisations of the period. These were often conducted with an overtone of class war - how dare these uneducated oiks (some of whom never went to Oxford or Cambridge, or even had a phoney degree from the University of Seven Sisters Road) challenge the wisdom of the classically educated ufological aristocracy?

British ufology has successfully re-buried the fossils, and with the demise of the membership organisations, which must always pander to the lowest common denominator of subscription payers, has become what MUFOB/Magonia has been seeking for forty years: a group of individual researchers with expertise in a range of subjects, who co-operate informally and voluntarily, without the need of a bureaucratic 'National UFO Group'.

Our work here is done!



# Mediums, Mystics and Martians

Gareth J. Medway

IN 1853 Spiritualism became the latest fashionable pursuit in the southern Spanish port of Cadiz. Séances were regularly held after dinner as a parlour game. At one, on 8 November 1853, there was the following exchange:

Is there a spirit present?

Yes.

What is your name?

Ege.

In what part of the world did you live?

North America.

Were you a man or a woman?

A woman.

What is your name in English?

Akka.

How do you translate bello into English?

Fine.

Why have you come here?

To do good.

To you or to us?

To you.

You can, then, do us good?

I can; it is all in the task.

How can we obtain good?

In emancipating woman; all depends upon her.

This feminist statement is a little surprising, coming in a conservative country in a conservative era, though no doubt the medium was a woman. Yet more unusual was a message from 'A Spontaneous Spirit' delivered on 30 November:

"The order distributes the harmonies. This law is that each globe of the solar system is inhabited by a humanity like yours; each member of this humanity is a complete being in the rank which it occupies; it possesses a head, a torso, and limbs. Each has its selected destination, collective or terrestrial, visible or invisible. The sun, like the planets and their satellites, has its inhabitants, with a complex destiny. Each of the humanities which people these diverse globes has a double existence, visible and



invisible, and a spiritual word appropriate to each of its states." (1)

This idea, of spiritual incarnation on different planets, was not only found in Spain. At that time, the French Spiritualist movement was led by Allan Kardec (1804-1869). In *The Gospel According to Spiritualism* Kardec (above) gave his own interpretation of various well-known verses from the Bible. On "In my father's house there are many mansions" (John 14:2) he commented: "The house of the father is the universe; the different mansions are the worlds which circulate in infinite space, and offer incarnate spirits sojourns appropriate for their advancement." (2) In 1870 Miss Anna Blackwell, an English disciple of Kardec resident in Paris, wrote a summary of his philosophy for the Committee of the London Dialectical Society, which went into more detail on this:

"Thus the globes of each solar-system

form a series of temporary residences - of progressive training-grounds, of places of reward or of punishment - for the spirits who are being educated in them. Of the planets of our system (some of which are yet to be discovered) Venus is said to be at a degree of development similar to that of our earth; Mars, to be inferior to our earth; Mercury, to be far inferior to Mars. All the others are declared to be superior to ours; while Jupiter, the largest, most advanced, and most glorious of them all, is said to be, even in its 'material' sphere, an abode of happiness far transcending anything we can imagine in our present chrysalis state." (3)

Among Kardec's associates was Camille Flammarion, who was to become the best-known French astronomer of the nineteenth century, owing largely to his popularising works, beginning with *The Plurality of Inhabited Worlds*. (4) In this, he asserted that all of the solar system is inhabited, even the rings of Saturn. (5) This belief was certainly bound up in his mind with Spiritualism: in a *Discourse Pronounced over the Tomb of Allan Kardec*, he addressed his hero: "You were the first, oh master and friend! you were the first, at the start of my astronomical career, who showed a sympathetic view of my deductions relative to the existence of celestial humanities; for, taking in hand the book of the Plurality of Inhabited Worlds, you placed it at the base of the doctrinal edifice of which you dreamt. (6)

It was Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464) who is first known to have proposed that the stars were other suns - at a time when it was usually thought that they were jewels or blocks of ice set in a crystalline sphere - and that they had inhabited planets circling them. (7) This was a remarkable conclusion, since he had no good reason for thinking this. Indeed, had CSICOPs existed in the fifteenth century, they would have told him that his hypothesis violated the principle of Ockham's Razor, so that he should not believe in it.

1. French translation in 'La Spiritisme à Cadiz en 1853 et 1868', *Revue Spirite* (ed. Allan Kardec), Volume 11, no.4, Paris, April 1868, pp.123-24. I have been unable to locate a copy of the original Spanish, which seems to have been published at Cadiz in 1854.
2. Allan Kardec, *L'Évangile selon le Spiritisme*, Federação Espírita Brasileira, Rio de Janeiro, 1979 (photographic reprint of the third French edition, Paris, 1866), p.21.
3. *Report on Spiritualism*, of the Committee of the London Dialectical Society, London, 1871, p.309. Her main source seems to have been 'La pluralité des mondes', *Revue Spirite*, Volume 1, no.3, March 1858, pp.65-73.
4. St. Le Tourneur, 'Camille Flammarion', *Dictionnaire de Biographie Française*, Paris, Librairie Letouzey et Ame, 1975, Tome 13, Cols.1462-63.
5. Camille Flammarion, *La Pluralité des Mondes Habités: Étude où l'on expose les conditions d'habitabilité des terres célestes, discutées au point de vue de l'astronomie et de la physiologie*, Paris, 1862, pp.39, 47. This first edition was only 50 pages long; the second, two years later, ran to 555.
6. Camille Flammarion, *Discours prononcé sur la tombe de Allan Kardec*, Paris, 1869, p.23.
7. Isaac Asimov, *Asimov's Biographical Encyclopedia of Science and Technology*, Pan, London, 1975, p.64.
8. Summary in Arthur Koestler, *The Sleepwalkers*, Pelican, 1975, pp.420-25.
9. Most of these extracted in Faith K. Pizor & T. Allan Comp, 'The Man in the Moone': *An Anthology of Antique Science Fiction and Fantasy*, Sidgwick & Jackson, London, 1971.
10. 'M. Poitevin, aéronaute', *Revue Spirite*, Volume 2, no.4, April 1859, p.108.
11. Ronald L. Numbers, 'Ellen Gould White', in Mircea Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Macmillan, New York, 1987, Volume 15, pp.377-79.
12. Ellen Gould White, *Early Writings*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, Maryland, 2000, pp.39-40.
13. Martin Gardner, *The New Age*, Prometheus, Buffalo, New York, 1991, p.258.
14. Arthur Conan Doyle, *The History of Spiritualism*, Cassell, London, 1926, Volume 1, pp.36-42.

Once the Copernican theory, as we call it, became generally accepted, it was widely recognised that, since the earth was not the centre of the cosmos, and so not unique, there could be life on other planets. This found expression in fantasies about interplanetary voyages. The first of these, *Somnium*, by Johannes Kepler himself, concerns the son of a witch whose mother summons up a demon to take him on a trip to the moon. (8) (Ironically, Kepler's own mother was once accused of witchcraft.) Others utilised such transportation as a chariot drawn by swans, whilst in 1784 'Vivenair' went to Uranus by balloon. (9)



Though this last seems very odd to us, it was not always so for the general public. At a séance in Paris in 1859, a deceased balloonist named M. Poitevin manifested, and discussed the possibilities of hot air balloons with the sitters. He said that many people were concerned whether "you will be able to go, by this means, to visit other planets"; with more sense than one might expect of a discarnate entity, he told them: "No, you will never be able to." (10)

Around 1840, an American named William Miller (right) predicted that Christ would return to earth in 1843 or 1844, the date finally becoming hardened to 22 October 1844. Christ failed to return on that day, however, causing confusion among his followers. Some of them were mollified in December, when, during a prayer meeting, a seventeen-year old girl named Ellen Gould Harmon (later Mrs White), went into a trance, in which God assured her that the Millerites' mistake lay in confusing the second coming of Christ with the start of the heavenly judgement, which had indeed begun on 22 October.

This event led to the foundation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which is still

active today. (11)

White had other visions, one of which she wrote of as follows:

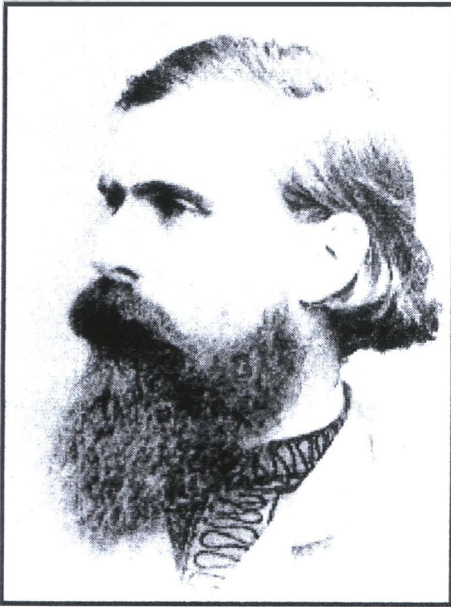
"The Lord has given me a view of other worlds. Wings were given me, and an angel attended me from the city to a place that was bright and glorious ... The inhabitants of the place were of all sizes; they were noble, majestic and lovely ... I asked one of them why they were so much more lovely than those on the earth. The reply was, "We have lived in strict obedience to the commandments of God, and have not fallen by disobedience, like those on the earth" ... Then I was taken to a world which had seven moons. There I saw good old Enoch, who had been translated." (12)

According to Martin Gardner, a Victorian history, *The Rise and Progress of the Seventh Day Adventists*, identified this world as Saturn, which was then believed to have seven moons; in a revised edition of the book, 1905, the number of moons seen by her had increased to eight; possibly this was related to the intervening discovery, by astronomers, of an eighth moon of Saturn. (13)

Meanwhile, a poorly-educated country boy from Poughkeepsie, New York State, Andrew Jackson Davis (1826-1910), had been mesmerised by a travelling showman, and found to have "very remarkable clairvoyant powers." Further experiments with him were performed by a local tailor named Levingston, who tried to get Davis to diagnose people's diseases whilst in mesmeric trance. When asked more general questions, he took to saying: "I will answer that in my book." At the age of nineteen he decided at the time for this had come, and he travelled to New York, where every day a Dr. Lyon put him into trance, and a Rev. William Fishbough acted as amanuensis. Dr George Bush (no relation), Professor of Hebrew at the University of New York, who was present at some of these sessions, wrote: "I can solemnly affirm that I have heard Davis correctly quote the Hebrew language in his lectures, and display a knowledge of geology which would have been astonishing in a person of his age, even if he had devoted years to the study." (14)

The bulky work that resulted, *The Principles of Nature*, appeared in 1847. It is an occult history of the cosmos, beginning with the creation of the stars and planets, going on to the geology and past epochs of the earth, pre- and ancient history, and the origin of religions, wherein he attacked the accuracy of the Bible. It is rather vague and rambling, though in high-flown language, e.g. "The material Universe is a Vortex, from which all forms, material and immaterial, are unfolded and developed to the external or surface."





Much of his account of the solar system conformed to the findings of contemporary astronomy, saying of Uranus that "The rotation of this planet on its axis has not as yet been discovered ... It revolves in its orbit around the sun once in eighty-four years; its distance being over eighteen hundred millions of miles: and it moves at the rate of fifteen thousand miles an hour." The further a planet was from the sun, the older it was, in accordance with the then accepted Kant-Laplace theory. All of the planets from Mercury to Saturn were inhabited by humans, but naturally the older the race, the more evolved and spiritual it was, so that whilst the men of Saturn were 'physically, mentally and morally perfected', those of Mercury, which had only been inhabited for 8000 years, were like 'most ferocious animals'. On earth, though, we could look forward to "that era when the interiors of men will be opened, and the spiritual communion will be established such as is now being enjoyed by the inhabitants of Mars, Jupiter and Saturn." (15)

A former Universalist minister, Thomas Lake Harris (above), was so impressed by *The Principles of Nature* that for four or five months he went around lecturing on its 'Spiritual Philosophy'. But after he had spoken in Cincinnati in 1848, he was suddenly reported to have seceded from the Davisites, and taken up abode with a 'Spiritual Brotherhood' in the city. (16) Five years later he was falling into inspired trances himself. A series of these occurred for fourteen days from 24 November 1853, during which he recited a lengthy poem, *An Epic of the Starry Heaven*. Since, fortunately, there was always been someone around to take dictation when he became entranced, in due course it was published. It took the form of a mystical journey:

*"A new-born language trembled on my tongue, / Whose tones accorded with the singing stars; / A company of spirits, blithe and young, / From Jupiter, and Mercury, and Mars, / Drew near..."*

They gave him a guided tour of heaven, which was partly traditional, but also involved other planets. Here is his account of the 'Interior of a School of Love upon the Planet Mercury':

*"I stand within a marble hall,  
It is like crystal, clear and white;  
In music sweet my footsteps fall;  
Its roof's a floor of golden light,  
An ether-sphere, serene and pure,  
In its own radiance far too bright  
For my thought's vision to endure."*

He also described the Garden of Eden, "situated upon an Islet in the Equatorial [sic] Region of the Planet Mars." (17)

Strangely enough, a twentieth century UFO author, Brinsley Le Poer Trench, also located the Garden of Eden on Mars. His argument was based upon certain Middle Eastern texts discovered by archaeologists, as quoted in W. F. Albright's appendix to *Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, which asserted that the river of Eden was dug (characteristic of a canal rather than a river), and that Eden was "in the Under World": "Well ... if the sun was to the Ancients, as to us, 'above' - any neighbouring world outside our orbit might easily be under. And our next-door neighbour on the 'under' side is Mars. And Mars is netted with canals!" (18) It is unlikely that he had ever heard of Lake Harris, yet nevertheless he was able to come up with the same peculiar idea.

Many occult writers are vague about concrete details: here is part of a dialogue between an unidentified 'Skeptic', and an unidentified 'Spirit' speaking through an unidentified medium, place and date also unspecified (published in America in 1868):

*Skeptic:* Cannot spirits visit the fixed stars?

*Spirit:* Some of them are near enough to be visited; Sirius, for example.

*Skeptic:* What is the difficulty? can they not move with the swiftness of thought?

*Spirit:* Doubtless they can, through a vacuum such as the stellar spaces. The difficulty is to think fast enough...

*Skeptic:* You spoke of talking with a spirit who had visited Sirius. Did he tell you any thing of it?

*Spirit:* Yes. It is larger than our sun by a third. It has a more extensive system of planets than we have.

Now, the idea that Sirius is inhabited has remained popular in recent times, notably in Robert Temple's *The Sirius Mystery*, in the

first chapter of which he attempted to establish the credibility of his hypothesis by quoting Dr. Su-Shu Huang of the Goddard Space Flight Center:

"...planets are formed around the main-sequence stars of spectral types later than F5. Thus, planets are formed just where life has the highest chance to flourish. Based on this view we can predict that nearly all single stars of the main sequence below F5 and perhaps above K5 have a fair chance of supporting life on their planets. Since they compose a few per cent of all stars, life should indeed be a common phenomenon in the universe." (19)

What Temple did not mention, or perhaps even know, is that Sirius is not 'later than F5', but of spectral type A, which by this theory would have no chance at all of supporting life on its planets, since it has none. (20)

Returning to our Skeptic and Spirit, the latter made an even more remarkable claim:

*Skeptic:* You spoke of the inhabitants of the moon. I thought there was no atmosphere there, and that, therefore, no life could exist there?

*Spirit:* The side turned from us is inhabited. The side turned toward us has no visible atmosphere, no water, and no life.

*Skeptic:* How can that be?

*Spirit:* The center of gravity of the moon is seven miles out of the center of the mass. That throws one side out fourteen miles, and making an equivalent of a mountain of that height. Although the atmosphere in the moon may reach thirty or forty miles, yet at the height of fourteen miles it would be insufficient to sustain life, and it would moreover be intensely cold. The side thus projecting is attracted toward the earth, and thus we never see but one side. On the other side, however, there are soil, atmosphere, water and vegetable and animal life, as on this earth. (21)

Once again, the same idea came up, seemingly independently, in more recent times. When taken by Venusians for a quick flip around the moon, he alleged, George Adamski was told that on the far side there is a strip "in which vegetation, trees and animals thrive, and in which people live in comfort"; he was able to see this for himself on a screen which gave him a magnified view of the surface. (22)

An even more bizarre theory had been propounded by no less a person than William Herschel, the discoverer of the planet Uranus. He argued that whilst the 'luminous atmosphere' of the sun is very hot, beneath it is a cool, inhabited world, whose mountains we occasionally see as sunspots. (23) Since such a distinguished man believed it, there should be no surprise that the notion later turned up in a séance.

15. Andrew Jackson Davis, *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations, and a Voice to Mankind*, John Chapman, London, 1847, pp.77, 167, 183, 208.
16. B. F. Barrett, *Davis' Revelations Sifted: A Review of Rev. T. L. Harris' Lectures, on "Spiritual Philosophy"*, Cincinnati, 1848.
17. Thomas Lake Harris, *An Epic of the Starry Heaven*, 4th edition, New York, 1854, pp. 25, 176, 34.
18. Brinsley le Poer Trench, *The Sky People*, Neville Spearman, London, 1960, p.39.
19. Robert Temple, *The Sirius Mystery*, Futura, 1976, p.31.
- 20 I. S. Shklovskii & Carl Sagan, *Intelligent Life in the Universe*, Delta, New York, 1966, Chapter 13.
21. Quoted in Andrew Jackson Davis, *A Stellar Key to the Summer Land*, William White, Boston & New York, 1868, pp.141-42, 145.
22. George Adamski, *Inside the Space Ships*, Abelard-Schuman, New York, 1955, pp.158-61.
23. M. A. Hoskin, 'William Herschel', in Charles Coulston Gillespie (ed.), *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, Scribner's, New York, 1972, Volume 5, p.333; Patrick Moore, *Can You Speak Venusian?*, Star, London, 1976, pp.42-43.
24. E.g. T. H. Hall, *New Light on Old Ghosts*, Duckworth, London, 1965, pp.86-119.
25. Viscount Adare, *Experiences in Spiritualism with Mr. D. D. Home*, [London, 1871], p.84.
26. Leslie A. Shephard (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Occultism & Parapsychology*, 3rd Edition, Gale Research, Detroit, Michigan, 1991, s.v. 'Buchanan, Joseph Rhodes', and 'Psychometry'.
27. William Denton, *The Soul of Things: Psychometric Experiments for Re-living History*, 3 volumes, Denton Publishing, Wellesley, Massachusetts, 1888, Volume 1 pp.38-39; Volume 3 pp.147-48, 159, 171-77.
28. Arthur C. Clarke, 'Armaments Race', *Tales from the White Hart*, Sidgwick & Jackson, London, 1973 (written 1954).
29. G. E. Wright, *Evidences of Spiritualism: Practical Views of Psychic Phenomena*, Kegan Paul, London, 1920, p.61.
30. Camille Flammarion, *La Planète Mars et ses Conditions d'Habitabilité*, Gauthier-Villars et Fils, Paris, 1892.

One of the most celebrated events in Victorian Spiritualism was when the medium Daniel Douglas Home purportedly floated out of an upstairs window and in again at another. There has naturally been much controversy as to whether this really happened or not, (24) but what is seldom mentioned is what was reported next:

"...pointing to a star, he asked us what we knew of that. He commented upon the very slight knowledge that most scientific men had; mentioning that not long ago the spots on the sun had been considered to be mountains; then water; then faculae [little torches]; but that now they knew them to be great chasms. "But what they do not know," he said, "is that the sun is covered with a beautiful vegetation, and full of organic life." Upon Viscount Adare asking: "Is not the sun hot?", he replied: "No, the sun is cold; the heat is produced and transmitted to the earth by the rays of light passing through various atmospheres." (25)

Another approach to psychical research was taken by Joseph Rhodes Buchanan, a professor of psychology and medical science at the Eclectic Medical Institute in Covington, Kentucky. A Bishop Polk told him how he was exceptionally sensitive to his surroundings: "If he touched brass in the dark he immediately knew it by its influence and the offensive metal taste in his mouth." In 1843 Buchanan decided to experiment, wrapped various chemical and metals in brown paper, and asked his students if they could detect them with their fingertips. Many of them were amazingly successful. The effects of medicines, when touched, was similar to those when they were actually taken, so that a subject who picked up an emetic had to put it down again to avoid vomiting. In 1849 he wrote an article for the *Journal of Man* in which he termed this faculty 'psychometry'. (26)

This paper was read by William Denton, a Yorkshireman recently settled in Ohio, who decided to investigate for himself, using his wife and other relations as psychometers. Mainly, he got them to examine geological samples, numerous readings of which were eventually published in his three-volume *The Soul of Things*. Holding a fragment of lava from the Kilauea volcano in Hawaii, a sensitive said: "I see the ocean and ships are sailing on it. This must be an island, for water is all around. Now I am turned from where I saw the vessels, and am looking at something most terrific. It seems as if an ocean of fire were pouring over a precipice, and boiling as it pours. The sight permeates my whole being, and inspires me with terror. I see it flow into the ocean and the water boils intensely." This, Denton observed, was an accurate description of

the eruption of Kilauea in 1840.

In the third volume, Denton related how, after supper one evening in 1866, he was in the orchard with his ten-year-old son Sherman. He pointed to Venus, and told the boy: "Look at that star; and then shut your eyes, and tell me what you see." The response was: "I see it round, but all rough. I guess it is more hilly than this world. The mountains seem higher than they do here. I see a tree larger than these round here, just like a toadstool. It is a kind of purple color. It has a monstrous trunk, larger than any I ever saw before. I see many of them. They are as thick as the woods down here. There are not as many on the mountains as on the plains. Inside of the trees is jelly-like stuff as sweet as honey. I tasted it. There is something hard inside that I spit out." His later vision of the sun was at least more accurate than Home's: "I see a world all lava. I tell you it is hot." Subsequently, Sherman gave an account of life on Mars, whose inhabitants had "four fingers instead of five - three fingers and a thumb", and cat-like eyes. They went around in velocipedes, which resembled bicycles except that they flew; some Martians had springs fitted to their feet, so that they could travel fast and jump great distances. "Is that planet older than ours?" "Yes, probably." (27)

The late Arthur C. Clarke was once moved to ask: "I wonder why we always are menaced by Mars? I suppose that man Wells started it. One day we may have a big interplanetary libel action on our hands..." (28) He was referring of course to *The War of the Worlds*, 1896, but there was much more written about that planet in that decade. The claim of Professor Schiaparelli, Director of the Milan Observatory, that it had a network of canals, and hence by implication intelligent life, had become widely accepted. (Incidentally, Schiaparelli was one of a group of scientists who investigated the medium Eusapia Palladino. (29)) In 1892 Camille Flammarion published a book about its 'habitability'. (30) (He tacitly abandoned discussion of the other planets, possibly because it had by then been realised that they are too hot or too cold for life.)

The 'airship' craze of 1897 is also worth mentioning here. It had long been believed, partly owing to the success of Jules Verne's novel *The Clipper of the Clouds*, that airships were the future of transport. In late March a rumour went around the American Midwest that a working prototype had been constructed. People in a number of towns and cities thought that they saw it, always in the evening and to the west. As several newspapers pointed out, this was because they were actually looking at the planet Venus, then at its brightest. Others, however, took advantage of April Fools' Day



to print articles purporting to reveal the truth, e.g. the *Indianapolis Journal* identified the inventor as a John O. Preast of Omaha, over whose house, they said, an airship had been seen hovering. (31) The joke was evidently felt to be too good to be reserved for one day of the year only, and similar stories continued to appear for weeks, based upon the testimony of people described as 'reputable citizens', and the like.

The point here is that, although the inventors were usually said to be American, or, in one case, to come from the north pole and be descendants of the ten lost tribes of Israel (32), a few were from much farther away. The St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* printed the narrative of Mr Hopkins, 'a prominent church member', who said he had come across a landed metal cylinder, near to which were a naked couple of unsurpassed good looks. He asked by signs where they came from, and they "pointed upward, pronouncing a word which, to my imagination, sounded like Mars." (33)

Another airship supposedly collided with a windmill in Aurora, Texas, killing the pilot, "and while his remains are badly disfigured, enough of the original has been picked up to show that he was not an inhabitant of this world. Mr. T. J. Weems, the United States signal service officer at this place and an authority on astronomy, gives it as his opinion that he was a native of the planet Mars." (34) (This case is still cited in UFO literature: in 1973 a 'treasure hunter' claimed to have discovered fragments of metal at the site, which resembled the skin of modern aircraft (35); in 1983 Bill Case of MUFON asked the local authorities for permission to dig up a grave in the local cemetery that he believed to be that of the alien, but they refused. (36))

On 10 April, a cigar-shaped aluminium ship was reported to have crashed to the west of Lanark, Illinois, on the farm of Johann Fliegeltoub. Two of the crew were killed, but a 'strange creature' in ancient Greek garb survived. According to a report filed by General F. A. Kerr, his tunic "was embroidered with a coat of arms over the breast, a shield with a bar sinister of link sausages and bearing a ham sandwich rampant." Having explained that "he and his companions were an exploring party from Mars", the alien then got his craft working again, and disappeared into the night sky. The general "returned to Lanark and securing a room at the hotel, sat up all night smoking opium and eating hasheesh to get in condition to write this dispatch." (37)

Evidently, planets go in and out of fashion. In the 1950s, flying saucers would nearly always come from Venus, but in the 1890s Mars was the usual place of an alien's origin. It is no surprise, therefore, than when

a Swiss woman became the first earthling to learn something of the language of another planet, it should have been Martian.

In 1891 Théodore Flournoy became professor of psychophysiology at the University of Geneva, and was soon involved with psychical research. In December 1893 he wrote to William James in England to say that "I am now deep in Myers's articles in the Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research, I have been asked to give two talks in a series of public lectures, after the New Year, and I shall do them on Verifiable Hallucination, Visions in the crystal ball, etc." Three months later he regretfully reported that: "The few mediums and subjects of telepathic hallucinations etc. whom I have been able to reach in the last

good faith of the medium is indisputable, and the strangeness of her revelation well calculated to convince the spiritualists of this group. However, in the five or six cases which concerned deceased members of my family, I finally had proof that these persons all had had, some fifty years ago, personal contacts with the parents of the medium; and the most natural supposition is that these revelations, invariably exact and dealing with odd facts, are reminiscences of accounts which the medium had heard from the mouth of her parents in her childhood." (38)

500 years earlier, Mademoiselle Smith revealed, she had been Simandini, the daughter of an Arab sheik who was married off to a Hindu prince named Sivrouka Hayaka. She had next been Marie

## Discovery of Evidence Surrounding 1897 UFO Crash Baffles Scientists

By OESANA SENCZYKZAR

An abandoned cemetery in Aurora, Tex., is the site of one of the most intensive UFO investigations ever. An alien specimen is believed to have been buried there when his unidentified flying object crashed by 1897.

Today 76 years later, a group of UFO investigators have found what they say may be pieces of the demolished aircraft.

The unknown space vehicle crashed into a rural windmill and exploded on April 18, 1897—six years before the first air flight made by man.

Scientists who studied the metal fragments from the crash site revealed that they are an aluminum alloy "unknown in the U.S. until about 1910 and not produced on this earth until early in the 20th century."

TAKING PART in the investigation are the International UFO Bureau, the National Investigative Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP) and the Midwest UFO Network (MUFON).

Hayden Hewes, director of the International UFO Bureau, explained: "According to reports at the time, the airship was scattered over several acres by the explosion



SIGNPOST announces arrival to Aurora, Tex., where UFO is believed to have crashed in 1897.



"We were living in Aurora at the time, but my mother and father wouldn't let me go with them when they went up to the crash site at Judge Proctor's well."

"When they returned home, they told me how the airship had exploded. The pilot was torn up and killed in the crash. The men of the town who gathered his remains said he was a 'small man' and buried him that same day in Aurora Cemetery."

"THAT CRASH certainly caused a lot of excitement," added Mrs. Evans. "Many people were frightened. They didn't know what to expect. That was years before we



three months in Geneva have not furnished me with decisive phenomena", so that his talk would have to be based upon the writings of Myers and James himself. After another year and a half, however, he was able to write of 'Hélène Smith' (the pseudonym he gave to shop girl Élise Müller) that: "... this woman is a veritable museum of all possible phenomena and has a repertoire of illimitable variety: she makes the table talk, - she hears voices, - she has visions, hallucinations, tactile and olfactory, - automatic writing - sometimes complete somnambulism, catalepsy, trances etc. All the automatism, sensory and motor, of Myers, - all the classical hysterical phenomena - present themselves in turn, in any order and in the most unexpected fashion, varying from one time to another. The contents of these phenomena are always of former events, going back a few or many years, being perfectly correct, generally having to do with the ancestors of the persons present. The

Antoinette, and her current spirit guide, Léopold, was the celebrated occultist Cagliostro. Léopold might rap upon the table, or speak through automatic writing, or directly through Hélène Smith's vocal cords.

Some of these séances were attended by a Mme Mirbel whose only son, Alexis, had recently died aged seventeen. On the evening of 25 November 1894, Mlle Smith suddenly found herself walking upon Mars, though it appeared to the others that her body was still in the room with them. "Hélène then began a description of all the strange things that presented themselves to her view, and caused her as much surprise as amusement. Carriages without horses or wheels, emitting sparks as they glided by, houses with fountains on the roof, a cradle having for curtains an angel made of iron with outstretched wings, etc. What seemed less strange, were people exactly like the inhabitants of our earth, save that both sexes wore the same costume, formed of trousers

very ample, and a long blouse, drawn tight about the waist and decorated with various designs." Finally, she saw a vast assembly hall, in which she met none other than Alexis Mirbel, who gave her some messages for his mother.

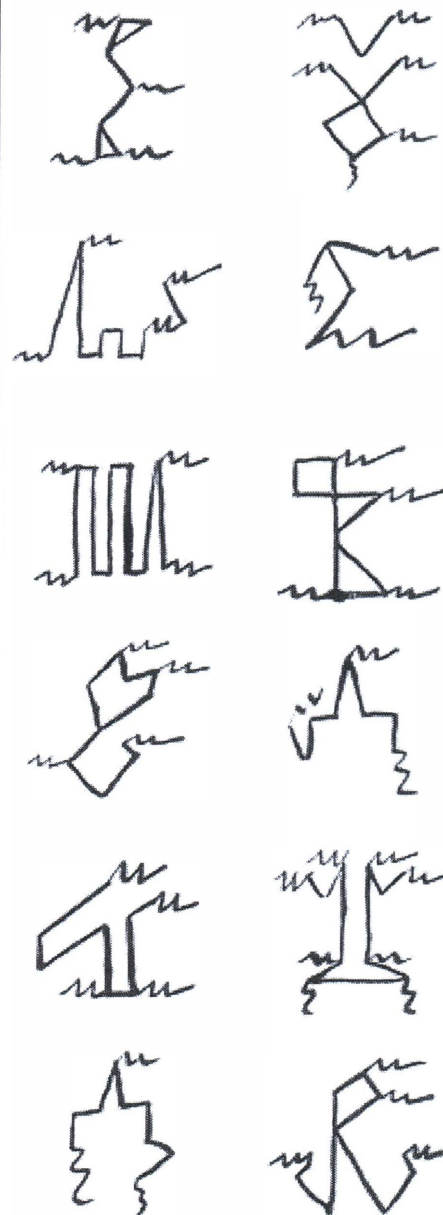
Further communications followed with the Martians, one of whom was Astané, a Hindu fakir formerly named Kanga, with whom she had been a friend when she was Simandini. Then messages started coming in the Martian language itself. About 20 September 1896 she received "Dodé né ci haudan té mess métiche Astané ké dé mé véche", which was followed on 2 November by a French translation: "Ceci est la maison du grand homme Astané que tu as vu", i.e. "This is the house of the great man Astané, whom thou has seen." Later, Alexis told Mme. Mirbel: "I modé mété modé modé iné palette is ché péliché ché chiré né ci ten ti vi." "O mère, tender mère, mère bien-aimée, calme tout ton souci, ton fils est près de toi." "Oh mother, tender mother, dearly loved mother, calm all thy care, thy son is near thee."

Flournoy was suspicious of the fact that all of the sounds of Martian also occur in French, although even other European languages have sounds which French does not, for instance it has no equivalent to the English h, j and ch. Moreover, although the vocabulary was quite different, Martian grammar was identical to that of French: in the phrase quand reviendra-t-il? ('when will he return?'), the -t- is purely euphonic; in the Martian for this, Kevi benmir m hed, the m likewise had no meaning. (39) He concluded that the language was merely a product of her unconscious mind, though it has been observed: "That the subconscious can work in this way is, perhaps, even more 'miraculous' than possible reincarnation on Mars." (40)

It is evident from the foregoing that receiving information about living beings on other planets, and communicating with them, was commonplace in nineteenth-century Spiritualism. Yet this fact is nowadays almost unknown. A history of Spiritualism will typically devote one passing sentence to the subject. (41) In 1988 Denton's *The Soul of Things* was reissued as part of a series of classic works on psychical research, but only the first volume, thus omitting the accounts of life on the planets; Colin Wilson, in a new introduction, confessed that these findings were "mostly bad science fiction". He did suggest that "Sherman would undoubtedly have been more accurate if he had been allowed to hold a piece of rock from the moon or Mars." (42)

One might think that communication with the dead would not be reported in modern ufology, since it is a supposedly

rationalist discipline. But it does occur sometimes. Whitley Strieber relates that a couple "in the south-eastern United States", whose seventeen-year-old son had died in a road accident the week before, were sitting in their living room around ten o'clock at night



**'Martian writing' as described by  
'Hélène Smith'**

when their dog became nervous and began to pace, so the wife decided to take him out.

"As she opened the front door, two things happened simultaneously. The first was that an orange ball of light swept away from the house, disappearing across a nearby line of trees. The next second, the couple's ten-year-old son came running downstairs yelling excitedly that "little blue men" had brought his older brother into the bedroom, and the older boy had a message: tell his mom and dad that he was okay." (43)

On the whole, however, ufologists tend

to regard psychic information with disdain, even those who are impressed by contactee stories or abduction research. In the first edition of *Flying Saucers Have Landed*, Desmond Leslie included a chapter on 'The Findings of Dr Meade Layne', which were a description of eight types of craft 'originating from Venus alone', for instance Type no.3: "A cigar-shaped craft, about 100 feet long and 25 feet wide at maximum diameter. Primarily an escort and fighting craft. Used only if circumstances required protection for the other craft. Normal crew: twenty. Uses both "jet" drive when in the atmosphere, and "Primary Drive" when in space." (44) It seems that Leslie did not realise that this information all derived from the pronouncements of a medium named Mark Probert, and that when he did find out he was not pleased, since in the later revised edition this section was deleted, with the comment that: "Since meeting his group and examining their methods of investigation, I am of the opinion that though his findings may have a certain substance, the methods by which they were obtained are far from satisfactory." (45) Spiritualist techniques were no longer felt to be scientific, in contrast to the hard reality of George Adamski's meeting with a Venusian in the Arizona desert, the truth of which Leslie continued to argue for at length.

Book sales suggest that the general public thought likewise. Cyril Richardson's *Venus Speaks* consisted of a series of telepathic communications from 'the chief scientist of the planet Venus', which he had "received between September 1953 and February 1954 with a request that they should be made public." (46) Now, *Flying Saucers Have Landed* was published in September 1953, and it no doubt encouraged Richardson to make contact himself; yet his booklet disappeared almost without trace, whereas the work that inspired it was an international bestseller.

One evening in mid-June 1965 Arthur Bryant of Scoriton, Devon, a gardener at an old people's home, told his wife that he had seen a UFO the week before. She did not believe him, and that might have been the end of the matter, but their two daughters, who were aged nine and eleven, overheard the conversation and talked about it at school. Word quickly spread around the district, and a woman who regularly tried to make trouble for the local council wrote a letter to the *South Devon Journal*, saying that a flying saucer had contaminated the area with radioactivity, and demanded that the authorities launch an immediate inquiry. Bryant was promptly besieged by nuisance visitors, including a local policeman who demanded "What's this I 'ear about Russian spacemen landing in your garden?" All this





**Arthur Bryant claimed to have met a reincarnated George Adamski**

distressed his wife, and necessitated him ejecting over-persistent news reporters bodily from his door. Threatening, anonymous letters were sent accusing him of being a communist; he even received five proposals of marriage.

The following Sunday the *Plymouth Independent* ran a big headline 'Did A Satellite Land in a Devon Field?' It was read by a Paignton woman, Mrs. Phoebe Beer, who mentioned it to her son Lionel, who was then Publicity Officer for BUFORA. In August Lionel and the chairman, Dr Doel, visited Scoriton and interviewed Bryant. He told them that on the night of 7 June he had heard a humming sound, and going outside saw a blue object "the apparent size of a pea at arm's length" cross the sky and descend a few fields away. Next day he visited the spot and found some pieces of metal, and a glass phial containing a piece of paper with the words *adelphos adelpho*, which is Greek for 'brother' to brother".

Having been persuaded to join BUFORA himself, later that year Bryant wrote to them saying that he had had an earlier and much more remarkable encounter. As he would relate it to Eileen Buckle and Norman Oliver, on 24 April 1965 he had been walking on Scoriton Down in the late afternoon when a saucer-shaped object suddenly appeared, swung around, then came to rest hovering a few feet above the ground of the field in front of him. A door opened, and he saw three figures in what he took to be diving suits, one of whom beckoned to him. As he approached they took off their helmets, which was an odd thing to do, since the purpose of a space helmet is to protect one from the atmosphere (or lack of it)

outside the craft; the incident is reminiscent of science fiction, where aliens often make this mistake. He could now see that two of them had eyes like cats' and very tall pointed conical foreheads. He also noticed that they had four fingers on each hand. The third looked like an ordinary human of about fifteen.

Inviting him aboard, the latter told Bryant that his name was 'Yamski', that they came from Venus, and that he had a message for him to give to 'Des Les': "Karma does work". He was taken on a tour of the rather bare interior. Unable to see any engines or controls, he asked how it could fly, and was told: "Ideo-motor movement". He was also informed that "forces from Epsilon were already here in the guise of Poltergeists". When Oliver later asked him whether any word had followed 'Epsilon', he said that a word like 'danni' or 'darni' had preceded it. The investigators thought that this might refer to Epsilon Eridani, as astronomers term it, which is a star comparatively near to ours. When they returned to the door, the aliens thanked him, he jumped to the ground again, and the craft vanished. (47)

As BUFORA quickly realised, George Adamski had died on 23 April 1965, one day before Bryant's encounter. In an obituary for *Flying Saucer Review*, Desmond Leslie had written: "I don't believe we have seen the last of him. If he is reborn on another planet he has promised to come back and contact us when possible." It appeared that he had wasted no time, yet the affair does not seem to have convinced anyone of the reality of reincarnation on Venus. Informed of the encounter, Leslie commented that: "The only puzzle here is why did he, with a fully operational saucer and a new, young body at his disposal, choose to touch down in Devon if he wanted to talk to me, when he knows I live in the bogs of Ireland - a bare two minutes' flip by saucer?" Timothy Good, who did his best to defend Adamski, wrote: "I had several meetings with Bryant, and although he conveyed the impression of sincerity and was a kindly soul, there are good reasons for refuting many of his claims." (48)

To conclude, by coincidence, whilst I was trying to finish this article, I came across this item in *thelondonpaper* 'funny old world' column: "The fictional home planet of Star Trek's Mr Spock may really exist. A powerful telescope found rocky worlds around the star Epsilon Eridani, which Spock's planet Vulcan orbits in the TV show. Nasa experts believe one could be habitable like Earth." (49) Perhaps one day dead humans will be reborn there.

31. Venus, e.g. *Iron Mountain Daily Tribune*, 30 March 1897; Preast of Omaha, *Indianapolis Journal*, 1 April 1897; both of these reprinted in Thomas E. Bullard, *The Airship File*, Bloomington, Indiana, 1982, p.82.
32. David Michael Jacobs, *The UFO Controversy in America*, Signet, 1976, p.8.
33. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 19 April 1897, in Bullard pp.101-2.
34. *Dallas Morning News*, 19 April 1897, in Bullard, p.228.
35. John Keel, *The Mothman Prophecies*, IllumiNet Press, Lilburn, Georgia, 1991, p.15
36. George C. Andrews, *Extra-Terrestrials Among Us*, Llewellyn, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1987, pp.81-82.
37. Quoted in Nigel Watson, 'Down to Earth', *Magonia* 43, July 1992, p.7.
38. *The Letters of William James and Théodore Flournoy*, edited by Robert C. LeClair, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, Milwaukee & London, 1966, pp.47-48.
39. Théodore Flournoy, *From India to the Planet Mars: A Case of Multiple Personality with Imaginary Languages*, edited and introduced by Sonu Shamdasani, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1994, pp.14-15, 90-91, 113, 137.
40. John Grant, *A Directory of Discarded Ideas*, Corgi, London, 1983, p.140.
41. E.g. Ronald Pearsall, *The Table-Rappers*, Book Club Associates, London, 1972, p.85; Deborah Blum, *Ghost Hunters*, Arrow Books, London, 2007, p.242.
42. Colin Wilson, in William Denton, *The Soul of Things*, Aquarian Press, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, 1988, p.x.
43. Whitley Strieber, *Confirmation: The Hard Evidence of Aliens among Us*, Simon & Schuster, London, 1998, pp.115-16.
44. Desmond Leslie & George Adamski, *Flying Saucers Have Landed*, Werner Laurie, London, 1953, p.129.
45. *Flying Saucers Have Landed*, new edition, Futura, London, 1977 (1st 1970).
46. Cyril Richardson, *Venus Speaks*, Regency Press, London, [1954].
47. Eileen Buckle, *The Scoriton Mystery*, Neville Spearman, London, 1967, particularly pp.47-73.
48. Lou Zinstagg & Timothy Good, *George Adamski: The Untold Story*, Ceti Publications, Beckenham, 1983, p.183.
49. 29 October 2008, p.7

# A Testable Hypothesis, 1947

Jerome Clark

ponders how ufology might have turned out if things had gone a little differently in 1947

On June 25, 1947, a falsifiable hypothesis about the transparently bogus character of the "flying disc" reports suddenly flooding the American press would have advanced the following confident predictions:

The excitement is a fad which will fade before it can do further harm to society.

The most sensational and suggestive reports will collapse under scrutiny.

The unexplained reports will be the least interesting — overwhelmingly of nebulous lights in the night sky where well-known tricks of vision come into play — and will remain technically unaccounted for only because there is insufficient information to nail down the precise prosaic solutions that would otherwise be certainly demonstrated.

Except in the case of the most banal reports which can readily be ascribed to mistaken observations of astronomical and meteorological phenomena, weather balloons, aircraft, and the like, witnesses will be fringe personalities — specifically, losers seeking attention, sufferers from mental disorders, chronic liars, sociopaths, fanatics, paranoids, the poorly educated, the superstitious, small-town folk, and other misfits. Virtually no intriguing, suggestive sightings will be made by multiple or independent observers, indicating clearly that the experience is subjective, not objective.

A correlation between mental illness and extraordinary experiential claims will be empirically demonstrated. Soon, psychiatrists will identify individuals' belief in flying-disc encounters --- or, depending upon circumstances, belief that others have had them -- as a symptom of mental disorder sufficient, in some instances, to warrant institutionalization. In cases where such a correlation cannot be documented, the claim will almost always prove, or be suspected with good (not merely speculative) reason, to be a hoax or a practical joke. Investigators will establish that in common with psychiatric difficulties, hoaxing plays a huge role in disc-reporting.

Flying discs will not show up on radar or other instruments. Ostensible trackings will fall to firmly established, indisputable conventional explanations once professionals examine the data. Analysis by technical experts will prove that all films and photographs of structured, craftlike objects either are faked or

depict conventional phenomena. When studied in laboratories by competent scientific authorities, alleged ground traces left by landed discs will be found in every instance to be of prosaic origin, and no educated authority will contest the identification.

Scientists, engineers, airline and military pilots, and other sophisticated observers will rarely, if ever, experience sightings that are unexplainable. Ostensibly puzzling sightings will be -- with barely any exceptions worth noting -- the province of naïve, disturbed, or dishonest claimants. There is, in short, no possibility that a quarter-century from now, a prominent, well-credentialed astronomer, drawing on many years of field investigation and interaction with supposed observers, will write a book titled *The Flying Disc Experience*, putting forth a manifestly absurd proposition: "When the long awaited [sic] solution to the flying-disc problem comes, I believe that it will prove to be not merely the next small step in the march of science but a mighty and totally unexpected quantum leap."

The more one knows about flying-disc reports, the easier it will be to solve them and to show to the full satisfaction of any intelligent, mentally stable outsider the conventional stimuli that generated them. There will be no controversy about this except among the credulous, cretinous, and cracked, whom all responsible citizens must shun as undesirables. Belief in flying discs as genuine anomalies -- and it will be "belief" unaccompanied by evidence -- that defy current knowledge will be exposed as the intellectual equivalent of faith in a flat earth, sun-sign astrology, phrenology, and worse. Most flying-disc promoters, incidentally, will be the sorts of individuals who embrace all of the above, some of them from the rubber rooms in which they are housed.

The thinness of the evidence for flying discs, like that for ball lightning, will ensure that no respectable person ever takes up the issue, except to recall it as a moment in the history of social pathology.

Those who seek to speak and advocate otherwise will be effectively and permanently silenced via the judicious application of ridicule.

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# 25 YEARS AGO

1983 saw the fifteenth year of publication for MUFOB/Magonia and I had a bit of fun comparing our editorial team (myself, John Harney and the sorely missed Roger Sandell) with three elderly characters from a long running TV situation comedy. Now that the two survivors actually are about the age of the characters depicted, I'm a little less sanguine about the comparison!

The leading article was by Jerome Clark, who has probably aged at the same rate as the rest of us. In 'Confessions of a Fortean Sceptic' Clark makes an honest confession of his earlier crimes against rationality, and comes up with a few rules by which the will to believe might be overcome. They are well worth reading and include "don't assume that the experts are always fools"; "don't believe every story your hear" (even, as the example that Jerry gives makes clear, ones told by high ranking military officers); and perhaps most importantly, "don't assume that all mysteries, even the genuine ones, have extraordinary solutions".

A long letter from Paul Deveraux defended the 'earth-lights' hypothesis, taking John Harney to task for his negative review of Paul's *Earth Lights*, which had appeared in *Magonia* 11. The entire 'earth-lights' discussion seems to have totally vanished from ufology, and I am not sure why this has happened. To some extent it is because it has been accepted and absorbed into the fabric of the subject, not always helpfully, as when events such as the lights seen during the Berwyn Mountain incident are 'explained' as 'earth-lights'. And Devereux himself moved onto wider interests. But I think largely it's been neglected because people didn't know what to do with it and it more or less got lost down the back of the sofa. The timing of its introduction to ufology was also unhelpful, coming just before the massive expansion of the abduction phenomenon.

My contribution was to issue the death notices for *Flying Saucer Review* after Gordon Creighton formally assumed the editorship. This was marked by a characteristically barmy rant from Creighton in which he declaimed that there was a conspiracy to remove UFO books from public libraries - one which as a librarian I was never privy to! I pointed this out in a letter to the new editor, which of course was never printed and resulted in our long-standing exchange arrangement with the magazine being severed.

Well, that's the last '25 Years Ago' column I'll be writing, but you'll be able to do your own historical research on our ever expanding website: <http://magonia.haaan.com/>



In the last of his stream-of-consciousness commentaries for Magonia, **Peter Rogerson** looks back on forty years and wonders: where did it all go right?

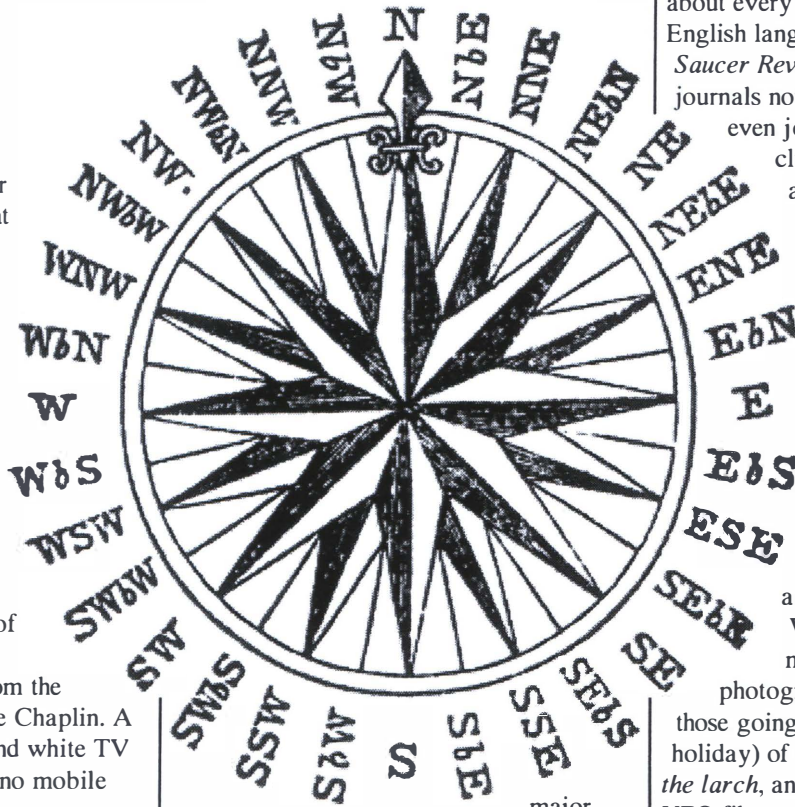
## NORTHERN ECHOES

It is hard to imagine that this journal in some incarnation or another has been around for at least forty years. The exact date depends whether you date its origins with the *Merseyside UFO Group Newsletter* which started in 1965, with John Harney's take over and change to *Bulletin* in 1966, or with the founding of the original *Merseyside UFO Bulletin* in January 1968.

The latter seems appropriate, born in the year of revolutions, in a world as remote from ours as it was from the days of Lindbergh and Charlie Chaplin. A world with only three black and white TV channels, no videos, no CDs, no mobile phones, no personal computers, no Internet. Early copies of the magazine were produced on hand-operated typewriters and printed by messy duplication processes. Of course there were similarities with our age: a deeply unpopular foreign war, the clouds of terrorism about to come across the horizon from Ireland, and a deepening economic crisis

There were of course UFOs, and all sorts of other strange and curious visions and beliefs. The paperback stalls were beginning to fill with Fortean, and over the preceding two or three years UFO books were among the main components, with titles like *Flying Saucers Serious Business*, *Flying Saucers are Hostile*, *The Flying Saucer Menace*, *Flying Saucers*, *the Startling Evidence for the Invasion from Outer Space*, or the more sober *Anatomy of a Phenomenon* and *Challenge to Science*.

In 1967 Britain had undergone its



major media UFO wave and newspapers were full of tales of lights in the sky and things at Warminster. Betty and Barney Hill was serialised in one of the Sunday papers, and the BBC's prestigious literary magazine *The Listener* hosted an article by UFO hippie John Michell.

I was going to say how different from today, for up to a month or two ago it seemed that ufology was really dead, no afterlife, no escape from the coffin this time; a subject for the social historians, a closed episode from the 20th century. Yet once again the old vampire has arisen and stalks the media again. Whether summoned for commercial reasons by the black arts of the Necromancers of Murdoch, or a spectre called from the vast deep by the credit crunch and economic downturn, time will tell.

From the moment it was established by

John Harney and the then science editor Alan Sharp, MUFOB was seen as following in the footsteps of its irreverent MUFORG predecessor, dousing ufological speculation with dollops of common sense. Of course soon Mr Rimmer joined the happy crew, and the first triumvirate, the Three Merseysiders Blind To Reality, if not In Black, was established.

Among their early readers was a schoolboy from Manchester who had a teenage boy's interest in flying saucers and all things Fortean. By 1969 my interest in ufology had led me beyond reading just about every book on the subject in the English language, to reading *Fate*, *Flying Saucer Review* *Spacelink* and other journals now lost in the mist of time. I

even joined the local flying saucer club, the notorious DIGAP. Even

among the not terribly critical ufologists of the period, DIGAP had a reputation of being something of a

graveyard for ufologists.

In 1968 they organised a conference, most notable for the fact that half of the advertised speakers had dropped out at the last minute, for a truly bizarre lecture on 'Sex and the Saucers' by Norman Oliver, a Pythonesque piece by Tony Wedd, which featured slides (a means of projecting

photographs on to screens beloved by those going on their first continental holiday) of trees: 'Number 1, The Larch, the larch, and an unbelievably badly faked UFO film.

A few months later, having nearly given a nervous breakdown to the then glitterati of British Ufology, Roger Stanway and Anthony Pace, who had come down trying to promote a serious scientific book on ufology, the group was desperately in search of speakers, so I suggested John Rimmer as a possible speaker. He did much better than Paceway, and even survived being told that John Harney had been silenced by the Men in Black!

John Rimmer had suggested that many UFO reports had psychological origins, but this was clearly anathema to the groups First Citizen, Supreme Commander and Chief Priest, Mr Arthur Tomlinson, who scurried around afterward trying to shore up the correct party line.

It was from that meeting that I became a correspondent of MUFOB, which meant

the editors had to decipher my handwriting, which as I have a kind of semi-dyslexia, meant them practising their skills at palaeography and code breaking.

After reading Jacques Vallée's *Passport to Magonia*, I conceived the idea of a continuing collection of type 1 UFO reports, (landings and near landings), and after some ten years I had accumulated over 5,000 such reports covering the period 1880-1980. These began to appear in MUFOB, and for a time I ran MUFOB's journal exchange programme.

In these early years the editors of MUFOB actually investigated UFO cases, including that of the Runcorn contactee Jim Cooke and a variety of weird tales from Widnes. The one I was involved with was the story of Miss Z and her hag experience. There might have been more but shortly afterwards John Rimmer married Judith and moved down to London, while MUFOB limped on for a couple more issues then seemed to die.

Meanwhile by a roundabout route I began corresponding with Roger Sandell, and it was clear that he was someone very much in MUFOB's style, and he began writing for the magazine. When in 1975 both John Harney and Roger Sandell moved to Richmond, they were able to team up with John Rimmer who then lived in New Malden, and the second great triumvirate was formed. After a single duplicated transitional issue MUFOB, now edited by John Rimmer changed to a printed A5 magazine. After a few issues it was clear that MUFOB (or the *Metempirical UFO Bulletin* for those who insisted that initials must mean something) was not a very appropriate title for the wider magazine, and eventually, at my suggestion, the name *Magonia* was chosen.

These became our glory years, *Magonia* was at the forefront, and all sorts of new and exiting ideas were floated. There were rough patches in the early 1980s, but we ploughed on. By the late 1980s there were no fewer than six editors (the triumvirate being joined by long time contributor Nigel Watson, folklorist Mick Goss and fantasy novelist Robert Rankin). Probably our finest hour was our stand against the whole Satanic abuse myth spearheaded by Roger Sandell. This was something that was causing real pain to real suffering to real people.

Then came alien abductions and the rise of the Abduction Finders General, and we turned our attention to them, with the same zeal. The days of standing on the sidelines as rather detached psycho-social

observers were ending, we were edging closer to a much more positive scepticism, and a much more polemical stance. At the same time our editorial panel thinned back the triumvirate as people moved on. Then at the start of 1996 came our greatest disaster, the sudden death of Roger Sandell. A sense of duty towards his memory as much as anything kept us going for a while, seeing us through to the rise of the Internet, and our own web pages. By the early 2000s *Magonia* was producing a quarterly magazine, a monthly newsletter and had no few than three web sites up and running.

Technical problems over the last couple of years have forced these down, and interest in the subject seemed to be waning, and it is not clear whether the proposed new incarnation for *Magonia* will go ahead. [*What's this - Ed.*]

If this is indeed farewell and not just a rest, back in a while, what can we conclude after forty years? Anyone who has read through our issues will have seen a growing scepticism on all our parts. Several years ago I cut back to book reviewing because I felt I had said all I could say. My personal position on the whole range of topics discussed in *Magonia* or *Fortean Times* is one of sceptical agnosticism. On the one hand there are many stories in the literature which if accurately and completely reported would be, to put it mildly, very puzzling indeed. This does not mean that this would provide evidence for the array of folk explanations usually trotted out, indeed most of those encounter as many, if not more, difficulties as the 'normal' ones. Full and accurate reporting however is often what we do not get in these subjects, often quite the contrary. There are obvious temptations to 'sex things up' and to produce a nice, marketable commodity rather than allow for all sorts of complexities.

There seems to be a great tendency among many writers in this field to prefer convoluted and baroque paranormal explanations to fairly straightforward normal ones. All too often there are the arguments from personal ego, crudely put they claim 'none of these chavs on the council estate/trailer park could put one over on a clever chap like me' or 'these hicks couldn't possibly have access to the special esoteric knowledge that a clever chap like me has'. This attitude is encountered time and again, along with the implicit argument that 'it is more plausible that everything we think we know about

the world is wrong and the whole of modern science is in error, than it is that a clever chap like me could be mistaken/fooled'. Of course, the sad fact is that being human and not Vulcan means that regardless of what education or qualifications we have, we can all be mistaken or fooled, or not perceive or remember things properly.

This means that those who propose new and extraordinary claims have to have actual evidence as opposed to assertion to back up their claim. In many cases it is not a question of the lack of 'extraordinary evidence' but the lack of any evidence at all. As there always seems a tendency to escalate the claims to destruction, it is not surprising that little actual investigation by neutral outsiders takes place. Neutral scientists may be prepared to look into reports of anomalous lights in the sky, or anomalous forms of communication, but try them on invisible aliens abducting people through solid walls, texting poltergeists, apported chickens or retroactive PK and their boggle factor is soon going to kick in.

Whatever the "real" nature of these alleged phenomena and experiences they undoubtedly exist as social phenomena, things people believe they have experienced and which they either fit into pre-existing belief systems or construct new ones. Give something a name and you summon it. An example is the very new idea of Shadow People. Starting as a name for something which did not have a folk name, the fleeting 'seeing' of shadowy forms on the periphery of vision, and was thus rarely reported. It has a 'scientific' name, *paradolgia*, and a probable physiological explanation, but that sounds rather like a disease and does not encourage reports. Give it a catchy name and you soon have websites devoted to it, and the initial very vague experience becomes more solidified, then all sorts of other experiences with quite different causes are dragged in. Here we can see a new belief system in the making, and already beginning its symbiotic feedback relationship with popular culture.

There will be more examples to come, which suggests that even if *Magonia* goes out with a proper Viking funeral and a grand wake, some day down the line someone is going to have to invent something very like it all over again. Meanwhile wherever you are, raise your glasses to the two Johns and the memory of Roger, and the vision and belief that was *Magonia*.



# THE UFO AS AN ANTI-SCIENTIFIC SYMBOL

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John Rimmer

*"At the end of the 1960's UFOs had been adopted by the underground, alternative culture of the time largely as a symbol of opposition to a mainstream society which it saw as being dominated by an industrial, scientific and militaristic complex. Underground magazines such as Oz, IT, Gandalf's Garden and Albion featured artwork which combined UFO imagery with Mucha-inspired eroticism, psychedelic graphics and mystical symbolism. This article from **MUFOB**, volume 2, number 4, by John Rimmer describes the feelings of that era, and marks the magazine's further move into the 'New Ufology'..."*

Publication of this piece led to one of my most treasured ufological mementos: a first edition of Jerome Clark and Loren Coleman's *The Unidentified*, inscribed "To John Rimmer, for writing that stunning and perceptive piece 'the UFO as an Anti-Scientific Symbol'. With much admiration, Jerome Clark"

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In a recent article Quentin Crewe puts forward an interesting thought on the public's attitude to UFOs and ufologists [1]. He cites the recent appearance of Flying Saucer Review's Gordon Creighton on *24 Hours* [a daily current affairs programme]. Crewe cannot understand why people like Creighton should be invited to television shows, and then hardly allowed to speak, and concludes that the public half-believes in UFOs, and have to keep knocking down the guardians of their belief in a sort of propitiation ritual.

The particular discussion under review was a classic of this genre. Despite Mr Creighton's continued assertions that he did not seriously consider that UFOs were extraterrestrial craft, Patrick Moore felt obliged to spend the greater part of the limited time proving that UFOs were not extraterrestrial craft. During this performance Moore emerged not as an arch-sceptic, which is a perfectly understandable attitude when confronted with such a tendentious subject, but as an unscientific and emotionally prejudiced individual. The lunacy of the whole episode lay in the BBC's naive belief that the question of UFOs was one that an astronomer could be expected to be an expert on. It would have been equally

valuable - or valueless - to have had a soil analyst, etymologist or business efficient expert.

However, to return to Quentin Crewe's suggestion. It does appear to a perceptive observer that there is a serious contradiction in the public's attitude to the question of the UFO. Mention UFOs to a friend who is not a student of the subject, and the initial reaction is one of laughter. As an editorial in this Bulletin has indicated, ufology is an extremely mirthful subject amongst the 'boring suburbanites'. [2] However on further investigation this attitude seems to break down. Pressed, an outsider will admit that "there could be something in it". More times than not they will admit to having read a UFO book; ultimately may come the admission that they too have seen a UFO.

In a not-untypical encounter such as this, one can see the conflict of attitudes in an individual. At the outset is the Establishment Attitude, fostered by such media as television and the national press and their scientific pundits like Patrick Moore. One cannot blame the national media for this attitude, as it is one found only too often within the ranks of ufologists themselves. One need only mention NICAP's attitude to contact

claims, and just about everybody's attitude to John Keel. On the other hand there is the public's desire for novelty and surprise, and a growing anti-scientific, almost neo-Luddite movement. Concurrent with increasing scientific development and technological advances, there is a vast opposing, populist emotion. the growth of the computer atrocity story, the reaction to transplant operations, the development of pastoralism as an almost political movement amongst minority communities in the United States are all symptoms of this. [3]

These are on too large a scale to be dismissed as a few reactionaries and Peter Simples. The UFO is the one thing which under present circumstances stands almost impregnable against the scientific floodtide. It is little wonder therefore that the UFO is being adopted by many as a sort of symbol of the neo-Luddite cause. It is the last refuge of the old magic. it is seen, literally and metaphorically, as the Holy Grail, unattainable, unimaginably remote, yet always near enough to lead us on, in a hopeless chase. The ufologist is the necromancer who can cast his spells upon the scientist and lead him stumbling into the enchanted forest, blundering into trees marked 'temperature inversion', or 'weather

balloon', and falling into thorns and thickets marked 'Venus through a heat haze'.

So much for the Wagnerian imagery. However the concept of the UFO as being magical and anti-scientific is valid and important. There is nowhere on the face of the earth and never has been, any society that has existed without magic. We are, in Europe, America and some other technologically advanced nations, very close to this situation. We have driven magic underground, but we have not eliminated it. It may be a dangerous thing if we do. The UFO is a fairly pleasant, often beautiful, rarely malignant piece of magic, far preferable to the violence and ugliness of some other magical survivals in our age. perhaps we should not attempt too much to explain the UFOs, either in terms of spacecraft or unknown forms of plasma, or even pieces of detached psyche. On the face of it we shall not be able to do this anyway. the UFO may be just *there*, for us to marvel at, worship, chase, gape at, or get little frissons of fear from.

Jung saw the UFO as the Circle, the Mandala, a symbol of wholeness and permanency. [4] Perhaps in its permanent inaccessibility it is a symbol of purity. In a world violated and sullied by radiation, smoke, fumes, the excrement of a scientific society, the UFO is almost a Virgin image of our time. Consider the so-called occupants of these craft. What are they but the dwarfs and elves, the pastoral inhabitant of unsullied hedgerow and field, and the dark northern forests that we have left behind. Here they come now from the UFOs, reminding us of our rural background. The hippie mystic sees the UFO as the Grail above Glastonbury; the French farmer sees the 'occupants' as small grotesque creatures of tree-root and woodland glade; the American factory worker sees the Men in Black as a re-creation of a romantic Chicago gangsterdom that never was (even their cars are from the past). Each perceives a phenomenon that is a part of their past, a movement against the Establishment's glorification of scientific progress.

Like all effective magic the UFO is a perversion of the orthodoxy rather than something totally different from it. It is the spacecraft of the scientist, but a spacecraft that does strange and irrational things: the occupants although weird and unearthly apparently wear spacesuits not so different from the ones worn by those symbols of scientific progress, the astronauts. The UFO parodies the developments of

science. Its essentially unscientific nature can be seen in the strange, almost obsessive interest it holds for scientists who are most vehement in denying its existence. A number of Patrick Moore's books suddenly introduce UFOs into the discussion of some astronomical issue, only for them to be dismissed as being of no importance. [5] One is reminded of atheists who spend a disproportionate amount of time disproving the existence of the devil. Other scientists, like Hynek, perhaps Condon, act as sceptical priests, who while not accepting the positive existence of ghosts, feel that it is worthwhile going to the trouble of exorcising them.

For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Perhaps for every scientific advance there is an equal and opposite mystical reaction. It has been noted that a large number of UFO incidents were reported in the USA after the launching of the first Soviet satellite. This could well be viewed as the reaction to that scientific advance. It will be interesting to see if there is a comparable reaction after the moon landings [yes, but not perhaps in the simplistic way suggested here. JR, 3/99]. It would be interesting to see if any of the major flap periods over the last 23 years followed immediately upon a major scientific advance. Certainly the first flaps of '46 and '47 followed the development of nuclear weapons. If science is a movement into the future, the UFO if it is a reaction, must be a movement into the past. We have seen above how the form of the UFO and especially its occupants are often reversions to ancient forms. If one analyses reports in more depth we can see a number of almost sentimental elements that are strongly opposed to the conventional view of the UFO as a futuristic phenomenon.

The stories told by the early contactees were apparently of journeys to incredibly advanced communities. However a closer look reveals the futurism described is already dated. it is the futurism of the 1930s, the New York World's Fair and *Amazing Stories* magazine. The architecture of these advanced worlds is either that of Superman's Krypton or an idealised Graeco-Roman myth. Images perhaps of an idyllic childhood. Although the witnesses of these early contacts may not have been science fiction addicts, I doubt if anyone of them does not connect Superman with secure childhood afternoons in some American mid-western town. [See Martin Kottmeyer's article 'Entirely Unprejudiced - The Cultural

Background of UFO Abduction Reports'. <http://magonia.haaan.com/1990/entirely-unprejudiced-the-cultural-background-of-ufo-abduction-reports/>]

The anti-scientific image of the UFO is now incredibly complex. Whether this is due to some fundamental change in the phenomenon itself, or an a new attitude which is being brought to bear on the study of the subject, is a matter of debate. It is clear that the UFO mystery is now one of gothic strangeness and wonder. It has retreated so far from scientific method that it is doubtful if it will ever be capable of explanation in any rational manner. The world of the UFO is peopled with a Tolkien-like collection of entities with no rational pattern of behaviour. If there is an overall plan it must be infinitely more complicated than the most farcical Italian comic opera. In this at least the victory of anti-science is almost complete: nothing so incredibly irrational could be taken seriously by any scientist. The Condon Report can be seen only as a document of surrender.

The people who consciously adopt an anti-scientific stance often regard themselves as a resistance movement - the 'underground'. Every resistance movement requires a figurehead, both as a rallying point for the committed and as an example to the uncommitted but vaguely sympathetic masses. In this movement the UFO is the Che Guevara image. Although 'killed' by the CIA of scientific analysis the underground is still wearing its 'Che lives' badges, and the UFOs are still there, and not just in the Bolivian jungle!

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# Some thoughts on 'The UFO as an Anti-Scientific Symbol'

I decided to use this article in the last regular issue of Magonia, as it is one of the most quoted and referred to articles that I have written for MUFOB and Magonia.

Before re-reading it in detail I was expecting to find it rather outdated and irrelevant, but instead I was surprised by just how relevant it is to the current situation, and in fact how predictive it seems to have been - not just ufologically, but politically.

What I refer to as neo-Luddite attitudes have developed into current 'green' thinking with its hostility to almost all scientific and industrial development. I referred to "the development of pastoralism to an almost political movement". Of course, it is now the basis of at least one political party and increasingly informs the policies of the major parties.

Increasingly now, when I read the material which is published in UFO-related books and posted on websites the degree of anti-scientific, even anti-human, sentiment that I find is alarming. The latest MUFON UFO Journal, for instance - which bears the statement 'MUFON's mission is the scientific study of UFOs for the benefit of humanity, research and education' - carries a review of a book called *Blue Star: Fulfilling Prophecy*, about the psychic messages given to a abductee/contactee, Miriam Delicado from aliens she describes as 'Tall Blondes'. These messages involve the fulfilment of "ancient Hop Indian prophecies ... heralding dramatic changes for the earth and our civilization". Not unsurprisingly Miriam Delicado believes that she has a role to play in these transformations.

Now, of course, this is a book review, and we've reviewed some pretty weird stuff in Magonia over the years, so you can't take it as being necessarily indicative of the views of MUFON itself, inasmuch as it has any collective views. But this book seems typical of the type of material which is now swamping the UFO field. Another

book reviewed in MUFON UFO Journal is *Lupo - Conversations with an ET*, and again Hopi Indian prophecies crop up, and, like *Blue Star*, it is enthusiastically reviewed.

In these books, and in dozens like them, there is the underlying assumption that mankind is some sort of inferior species that needs to be either redeemed or re-educated by the aliens, or wiped off the face of the earth altogether in some sort of cosmic cleansing - an idea which also appeals to many in the 'Deep Green' movement. Jonathan Porrit, one of Britain's most prominent (in column-inch terms at least) Green Gurus, a close associate of our next King and an advisor to the Prime Minister, speaking at something called the Optimum Population Trust is calling for Britain's population to be radically reduced in the future. Any volunteers?

I comment in the article that "if science is a movement into the future, the UFO ... must be a movement into the past". The forty years that have passed since writing that have confirmed that view beyond doubt. Hopi Indian prophecies, Aztec calendars, messages from earth-spirits in the form of crop circles, all represent a continual retreat towards a pre-scientific world view.

Perhaps the thing which I got most wrong in my analysis was the assumption that the fauna of the UFO world would remain as mixed and diverse as it was in the 1960s, when tall Nordics rubbed shoulders with hairy dwarfs, space-suit clad sample-collectors, disembodied brains, walking trash-cans and a hundred other oddities. Nearly all now replaced by the global monopoly of the big-headed, black-eyed Greys, the Starbucks of the UFO world.

The sceptical attitude seems to have changed little since the late 'sixties as well. I referred to Hynek and Condon as 'sceptical priests', not believing in the subject, yet prepared to 'exorcise' it. Since

then we have seen the arrival of a churchful of sceptical priests with the creation of CSICOP (recently renamed CSI, Crime Scene Investigation, presumably, for crimes against science!). Although Magonia is very much in alignment with most of CSICOP's expressed views on UFOs, we do feel at times they fall over in the area of heresy-hunters, and scepticism becomes a sort of game, where only they know the rules.

Allow me a brief diversion here. A question which I have asked a number of times on Internet forums such as UFO Updates, and never received an acknowledgment, let alone an answer, is this:

Why, by and large, have American sceptics like Klass and Menzel come to the subject from outside - academic science, technical journalism, whereas British sceptical ufologists seem to have risen through the ranks of 'gutter-roots' ufology (to use Peter Rogerson's evocative term) to achieve the sceptical positions they hold.

In the essay, I describe the 'dated futurism' of the alien worlds described by contactees. Of course there aren't so many contactees around these days (but more than the 'Serious Ufologists' would have you believe) but the worlds of the abductees are just as dated in their 'futuristic' imaginings. In a world where humble old *homo sapiens* can work out the very structures of life from tiny scraps of DNA, our highly-advances, transport-you-through-brick-walls aliens are still going around gouging scoops out of victims legs, sticking probes up their noses, and doing God-knows-what with their nether regions!

Finally, even what I thought was my most dated reference, Che Guevara, seems to be current again, with the release of *The Motorcycle Diaries*, and the recent release of Part Two of Stephen Soderberg's biopic -- 'Che lives!', and so, for the foreseeable future will the UFO, but from now on it'll have to manage without *Magonia*.

— John Rimmer

**The Pelican** has recently discovered a book by John Spencer (1) which confirms his conclusions that ufology is a non-subject, just modern folklore, delusions and misperceptions, with a few reports which are hard to explain, usually because the testimony is not sufficiently precise.

Spencer concludes: "I believe that there are two unconnected UFO phenomena brought together falsely. The first, the distant sightings are probably mundane, Earth-based phenomena for the most part, but may include some natural forces such as earth energies or atmospheric phenomena. . . . The second UFO phenomenon is the close encounters on which this book is focused. This could be divided into four front-runner possibilities (with complicated sub-sets): (a) alien intervention; (b) intelligent but terrestrial, Gaia-like, energies; (c) natural, non-intelligent energies we have yet to understand; and (d) human consciousness."

Spencer favours a combination of (c) and (d), but of course *The Pelican* favours only (d). As the Pelican has previously noted, some of the more puzzling UFO reports are hoaxes. They fool many Serious Ufologists because they are rather elaborate hoaxes, and the Serious Ufologists argue that they can't be fooled by witnesses who are evidently - to them - not very intelligent or well educated. These ufologists are also very reluctant to accept, or even to consider, mundane explanations for the distant sightings. They also link these sightings with close encounter reports, even though they must seem, to the *impartial* investigator, to have nothing in common. Spencer, in common with *The Pelican* and some ufologists, but not most of the North American Serious Ufologists, has the answer:

"So why do UFO researchers link the two categories of UFO phenomena? They do so because it fits the Extraterrestrial Hypothesis (ETH) that many people are seeking. And the reason that the ETH fits so well is not that it answers the evidence, but rather that researchers, out of the mass of data available to them, have selected only the evidence which supports the theory."

Spencer has also noticed the relationships between the content of close-encounter and abduction reports and popular culture, particularly science-fiction films. Most other details of abduction reports, which have been dealt with in *Magonia* over the years, are also described and commented on. Magonians have often discussed the typically North American approach to alien contact reports, which can be summed up as



## THE PELICAN WRITES

*El Pelicano es fuerte en sus  
apreciaciones, pero muy razonable.*

**Abductions turn the witnesses into victims and the researcher becomes Special Top Dog, riding in to save the day. Contactee claims, on the other hand, make the witness special, reducing the researcher to the level of journalist**

Abductees Good, Contactees Bad.

In his discussion of this topic Spencer writes:

"Ufology as a subject is largely being written about -- and at least to some extent created -- by the researchers. Abductions turn the witnesses into victims and the researcher becomes Special Top Dog, riding in on his white charger to Save The Day. Contactee claims, on the other hand, make the witness special, reducing the researcher to the level of journalist. The more manipulative of UFO researchers are creating a niche for themselves which is challenged by contactee claims."

There is also discussion of how abductees are asked leading questions and

produce confabulations which tell the investigators what they want to hear. This is relevant to a review by Gareth Medway of a book by David Jacobs, discussing his work with abductees and his bizarre theories about alien/human hybrids, (2) which has been posted on the *Magonia* web site. (3)

Medway's review is sceptical, but it has attracted some interesting comments from one of Jacobs's research subjects, Emma Woods, who believes that "there is a real and anomalous process at work, although I do not know what it is". However, she notes: "In regard to my hypnosis with Dr Jacobs, I believe that I confabulated a lot of what I remembered, even though he told me that he believed that most of what I recalled was accurate. . . . He also asked me leading questions during my hypnosis sessions, and passed commentary on my memories as I was retrieving them, which I believe influenced them."

This is a good example of how the wishes and beliefs of the investigator influence the content of unusual experiences. In the old days some people believed that they had been abducted by the fairies, but as the flying saucer subculture evolved, the abductors became extraterrestrials, who could always avoid

capture themselves because of their superior technology.

An extreme example of the wishes and beliefs of UFO abduction researchers is the Betty and Barney Hill case. Most of them have treated the story as if it were a real abduction by real aliens, but more objective investigators have provided explanations for most of the events described by the Hills. A good example is an investigation by Jim Macdonald, who drove over the route taken by the Hills and managed to account for nearly all the observations which they reported. (4) Of course, this

is not as interesting as the interpretations given by the ufological entertainers on their endless rounds of lectures, conferences, chat shows and TV "documentaries". Treat these people with the contempt they deserve, says *The Pelican* and **Make Ufology History**.

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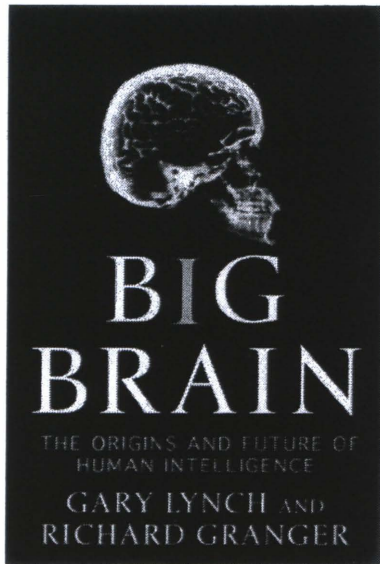
# BOOK REVIEWS

BY PETER ROBERTSON, EXCEPT WHERE STATED

Gary Lynch and Richard Grainger. *Big Brain: the origins and future of human intelligence*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. £14.99

Pseudoscience comes in many guises but it is usually well signposted: the publishers are notorious for producing crank books, the authors have no relevant qualifications, or blazon their PhD's in some totally irrelevant subject across the title page. This one is different, the authors are real professors (of psychiatry and computational science respectively) at real universities, the title does not blazon their degrees, they have quotes from actual real authorities in the world of neuroscience on their blurb, and it is published by one of the most respected academic publishers. But...

Well, they tell an interesting story. Once upon a time, long ago (in 1913 actually) there was discovered at Boskop in South Africa the remains of a forgotten type of human being with a huge skull with a giant brain. This to be the first of a number of these ancient supermen to be discovered. They were given the name *Homo Capenensis*. Scientific papers were written about them, then silence. They did not fit in with the picture of human evolution suggested by the fake Piltdown skull, so were quietly forgotten about. The authors quote from a number of pre-War scientific papers, waxing lyrical about their huge cranial capacity. They speculate about their amazing capabilities, beings who are to us what we are to *Homo Erectus*, whose imaginations soar to the stars. Beings whose huge foreheads and little faces look like popular images of ufonauts.



to the lost world of *Agharathi*, fled the earth in a flying saucer or built the statues on Easter Island. A new myth is being born.

Too good to be true you might think? You're right, it is. Indeed there were a group of skulls discovered in the early years of the twentieth century, to which the name Boskop Man was given. However the context has to be understood. This was a period in which notions of human evolution were hazy at best. Only the Javan fossil of *Pithecanthropus* (*Homo erectus*), Neanderthal skeletons, and the jaw of *Homo heidelbergensis*, and the notorious Piltdown skull were known. There was a tendency to place all of these on side branches and look for really ancient, really human remains. Old literature was full of them, Lloyds Man, Galley Hill Man and the like. The idea of large brains in remote periods actually fitted in with the then view of human evolution in which large brains developed first, the exact opposite of what we now know to be the case. Until the invention of modern techniques from the early 1960s onwards, dating was little more than guesswork, and reconstruction, and this was the generation that 'reconstructed' the Neanderthals and shambling ape-men on the basis of a single arthritic individual, and produced half a dozen different 'reconstruction's' of Piltdown man.

The imagination is gripped, and one can already see how the story is taken up on the internet: they are human alien hybrids, Mel Torres' lost race of parahumans building the flying saucers and lord knows what else. Soon they will be reported as having fled



Despite this, even the old authorities were not as mystified by the Boskop remains as these authors pretend. Books written from the 1930s to the mid 1950s all connect them to the people now known as Khosians but then known as 'Bushmen', 'Hottentots' and 'Sandlopers'. Loren Eiseley whom the authors quote at length was clear about this, so how come they don't follow this up?

Eiseley however, influenced by ideas of orthogenesis or self-generated evolution, conjured up the notion that these skulls were the result of runaway neotony. He was influenced by the same sort of folk ideas of evolution which inspired the creation of the Mekon as the huge brained, small faced man of the future. This notion had been suggested by earlier writers, but their motivation was to present the Bushmen as primitive overgrown children. Believing the Boskop skull to be old, and that of the ancestor of 'primitive savages' Sir Arthur Keith, for example, found evidence that the brain had 'primitive features'. He had 'discovered' the same about the modern human skull used in the Piltdown fraud.

After 1958, several years after the Piltdown fake was exposed the Boskop and related remains were re-examined by Dr Ronald Singer who concluded that there was no Boskop race, that this had just been an arbitrary name given to large skulls from a variety of times and places and taken out of context of the rest of the remains. They are now seen to be part of the typical Paleo-Khosian population of the area. No cover up, just new information.

So what this book produces is, after all, classic pseudoscience, people with expertise in one field writing on subjects way outside their specialisation, too lazy or arrogant to phone up or email colleagues in the relevant field (or even do a google search) to check up, the recycling of long outdated ideas,

selective quoting, the erection of vast edifices of speculation on minimal evidence etc, publishers too lazy to check simple facts.

There is an additional new problem which we are going to encounter more and more. Old, out of copyright material is constantly being added to the web, but often the material which refutes, corrects or amends it is still in copyright and is not on the web, or is only on expensive subscription sites. At one time, when old material was consulted, it was in old dusty volumes or reels of microfilm, consulted in major libraries. The social context, and the context of the whole source of the material (the other articles, the letters, the adverts) all gave a psychological sense of age. Now this old material can be viewed on the web, often looking as fresh as yesterdays news, no longer giving that psychological sense of age and distance, that warns us that this material may be very old hat indeed, and that some real hard research may be needed to check its current validity.

No doubt these authors wanted a fascinating story around which they could weave their account of brain evolution, but they have set out a hare which will be chased by cranks and creationists for years to come, and have done a major disservice to science.

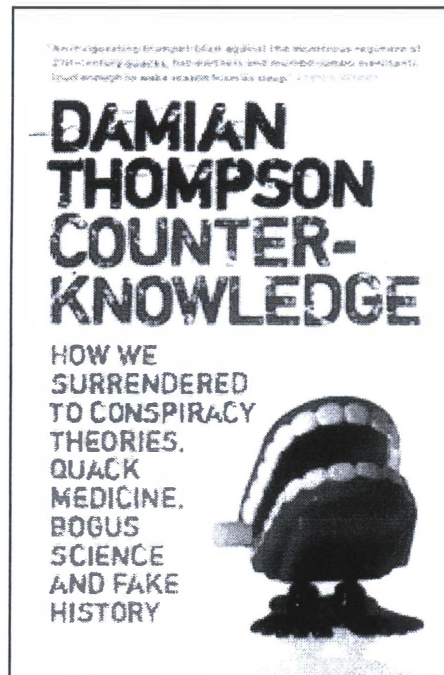
**Damian Thompson. *Counterknowledge: how we surrendered to conspiracy theories, quack medicine, bogus science and fake history*. Atlantic Books, 2008. £12.99**

I have a paradoxical reaction to this book, with its denunciation of pseudoscience, in that I agree with just about every one of its specific complaints, yet find myself in serious disagreement with the whole. It boils down to those moles in the eye and bricks in glass houses. Thompson bemoans the rise of pseudoscience, and its growing endorsement by publishers, bookshops, universities and the like. This is a problem of Mr T, for of course, he has to concede that in capitalist society the main job of publishers and bookselling chains is to make money for their shareholders and not to educate the public. He is less ready to concede that increasingly universities are also money making businesses, or that their role is increasingly not one of promoting critical thinking or high quality 'education' but providing vocational courses aimed at making its graduates useful tools for the boss class. It makes little difference whether these bosses are the proprietors of hotel chains, used car salesmen, hamburger makers or the promoters of various health fads. If said bosses provide generous enough funds or freebies to the unis they will find their backsides most assiduously licked.

This is problem for Thompson because he is a writer on the Tory Party's chief

cheerleader *The Daily Telegraph*. He is much happier attacking the usual suspects and folk devils such as politically correct academics, social workers, postmodernists, Muslims etc. Perhaps that is why nowhere in this book is it mentioned that the chief promoter of every new age nonsense and alternative health scam going is the right wing Tory newspaper, the *Daily Mail*, or that by far and away the biggest promoter of nutty 'Diana was murdered' conspiracies is the right wing Tory newspaper the *Daily Express*.

His attacks on Muslims, Mormons and the like may be somewhat related to the fact that these belief systems are competitors to his own, Roman Catholicism. The unkind might be tempted to hint that it is rather likely that all the new age medical fads and traditional wisdoms going have not had as deleterious effect on world health as the Roman Catholic church's opposition to condoms, contraception, abortion, stem cell research, IVF etc.



There are attacks on pseudo-history, many well aimed, but again, one of the skeptics major mantras is "extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence". Now I don't know whether Jesus of Nazareth was married to Mary Magdalene or anyone else, and I imagine no one ever will. However I, for example, find that a rather less extraordinary claim, than say the claim by the Roman Catholic Church that his mother was bodily transported up to heaven.

Of course some people such as Tories and Roman Catholics would, correctly, deduce that I have biases of my own. Of course I do, so does everyone. Our prior beliefs inform what we consider to be extraordinary claims. The idea that Jesus was married is an extraordinary claim to

Thompson because of specific aspects of Christian theology and attitudes to sexuality. The 'scientific' way to test such a hypothesis would be to select say 100 radical Jewish preachers from BCE100 to CE100 and find how many were married. Perhaps easier said than done.

It is not at all clear what Thompson proposes should be done to curb the sins of the publishing industry, (the obvious answer is don't buy crap and it will go away if left unsold). One suspects that deep in his soul there are longings for the good old days of the *Index Librorum*, or for some secular equivalent by which "the gatekeepers of knowledge" could keep out all sorts of heresies.

Again one can sense here how the modern scientific Puritanism has developed from a background of Christian theology and its sharp distinctions between "truth" and "error", and that in some ways it has inherited Christianity's opposition to folk religion and syncretisation.

The reality is that mountains of nonsense are the price we pay for living in a free society, and that the best defence against it is free speech. The one thing which would probably clear out a lot of the nonsense and pseudoscience would be the complete abolition of the libel laws behind which con artists of various descriptions can hide.

Of course there may be limits to the usefulness of such an approach, especially when dealing with radical kinds of fundamentalist kinds of Christianity or Islam (or perhaps in some cases one should say pseudo Christianity or Pseudo Islam). Of particular concern is the importation of a whole raft of Euro-American radical right rhetoric from creationism to holocaust denial into 'fundamentalist' 'Islam'. Here the last thing we need is legislation which would privilege say Scientology and the Moonies above fascism and communism in the freedom of public speech.

**Jeffrey Bennett. *Beyond UFOs: the search for extraterrestrial life and its astonishing implications for our future*. Princeton University Press, 2008. \$26.95**

**Surendra Verma. *Why Aren't They Here: the question of life on other worlds*. Icon Books, 2008. £7.99**

Books on 'life on other planets' face one major problem, there is no actual hard evidence that the subject of their topic actually exists, so most of what can be written on the topic consists of either pure speculation or other topics. Therefore much of both of these books is devoted to slightly different topics than the title suggests. Bennett, a science educator, takes in themes such as what is science, what is life etc, while Verma goes on a whistle stop tour of



the history of belief in ETs.

Bennett's book takes in a study of possible habitats for aliens in the solar system, whereas Verma is more concerned with philosophical issues.

As a child Bennett once believed that flashes of light seen around the house were aliens trying to communicate with him, and though he has given up this childish naiveté, there is a strong core of faith in his writing, his believe in the aliens is as

much a quasi-religious one, as that of any longer for the space brothers. Real aliens will be from a 'grown up civilisation', ie one with a world government, no more wars and all the other 1960s dreams.

They will have amazing technologies that we cannot imagine, but will also have radio and TV (and watch the Simpson's on the latter?).

Bennett's faith is based on rather old fashioned science. While at one level he does grasp that evolution proceeds through Darwinian mechanisms, old ideas of orthogenesis and Lamarkianism persist, the idea that there is a ladder of life, which organisms are crawling up, with us at the top, and that our kind of intelligence is inevitable.

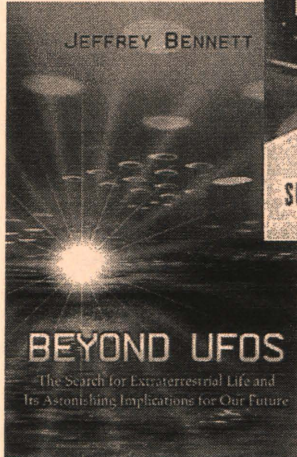
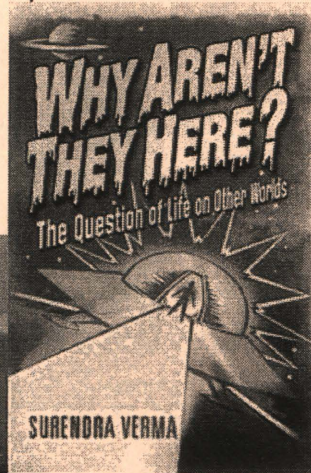
If this is the case, where are all these aliens, why aren't the skies full of their handiwork. This is the so-called Fermi Paradox, which is the origin of Verma's title. Various solutions are offered, none perhaps wholly satisfactory, but most will centre on one obvious fact that writers like Bennett seem really unable to fully grasp, is that real aliens will be just that, alien, not people of a different shape who build cities and spaceships and watch TV. Enthusiasts for ETs tend to hold two mutually contradictory notions about them, on the one hand they are advanced, as 'advanced' upon us as we are upon the hair-louse or the barnacle. But on the other hand they are still preoccupied with the sort of projects which occupy our limited human imagination, such as radio telescopes, spaceships and the like. In other words they are essentially us.

Of course that begs the question as to what can 'advanced' mean in a cross-species comparison. Just pose the question "is a giraffe more or less advanced than a hippopotamus" and its absurdity is apparent.

How much more absurd is a comparison with organisms far more biologically different from us than yeast or slime mould.

If I were to make my own guess, I would suspect that in its broadest sense 'life' is common out there, mostly microscopic and simple, but there will be a fair number of rich, diverse and unique biospheres, scattered among them

will be ones where something roughly equivalent to techno-linguistic intelligence has developed, organisms capable of transmitting and receiving complex abstract ideas and modifying their environment on a major scale by some means; there may even be forms of meta-cultural complexity, to which the whole of science, art, theology, literature, would be little more than *woof woof miow, miow*; but of human projects and human hopes, dreams and fears we will find none. Perhaps alien inventions made to serve alien needs, but no spaceships, no radio telescopes, no TV and no Simpsons.



**John Warne Monroe.**  
*Laboratories of Faith: mesmerism, spiritism and occultism in modern France.* Princeton UP, 2008. £17.95

The study of rise of spiritualism and psychical

research in the United States and Britain has been well served over the years, and in this book Monroe brings a scholarly attention to developments in French mesmerism and spiritism from roughly 1848 to 1914, with a concluding chapter on later issues.

French spiritualism and mesmerism is here shown first as a radical republican and oppositional force, which gradually began to work out accommodations with the reactionary regime of Louis Napoleon. It was in this period that the schoolteacher H. D Rivail, who wrote on the pseudonym Allan Kardec, constructed the ideology of Spiritism, the main themes of which were an attempt at as much reconciliation with the

Catholic Church as possible, and the promulgation of a belief in reincarnation. The latter seems to have been adopted to allow for the argument that the poor and downtrodden were that way because they were working out their karma of past sins, and therefore it would be wrong to improve their lot through socialism - a comforting thought for the increasingly prosperous bourgeoisie. The spiritists had a good political nose and when the Empire was overthrown they turned their allegiance to the new republic instead. Alas none of these manoeuvres earned much credit with either side in France's long culture wars, the Catholics continuing to denounce them as demon worshipping heretics, and the rationalists as superstitious fools.

In imitation of the Catholic church, Rivail/Kardec had created a centralised authoritarian movement which tested the Spirits with stringent ideological tests, worthy of any Trotskyist sect. Messages which came from spirits who agreed with Kardec were genuine, those which disagreed at best came from the sort of spirits which were in most urgent need of a reincarnation into a life of poverty and drudgery to work off their karma.

After Kardec's death Spiritism moved more into the sort of exciting realms which featured in Anglo-Saxon countries, like fake spirit photographs which resembled folk images of ghosts.

Perhaps because it falls outside the main period covered by this book there is no equivalent discussion of the rise of ectoplasm and the bizarre experiments with it by Charles Richet and Gutave Geley. The final chapter however does note the significance of *Morning of the Magicians* and *Dawn of Magic* which originated many of the beliefs of the modern cultic milieu.

**Chris A. Rutkowski.** *A World of UFOs.* Dundurn Press, 2008. £14.99

It is perhaps fitting that what will be the last review I do for *Magonia*, at least in its present form and evidence - for any possible afterlife has yet to surface - should be this summary of the UFO situation as of 2008.

As UFO books go, this is not a bad book, and Rutkowski is a much more sensible fellow than many in this field. It is just, well, pointless. Pointless because it adds nothing new to the subject and says nothing that has not been said dozens of times before.

There are lists of the five best known UFO cases: Roswell, Betty and Barney Hill, Rendlesham Forest, the Tehran Incident and the Phoenix Lights; the most bizarre cases: Kelly Hopkinsville, Joe Simonton and his alien pancake, the Tully Saucer Nests, Antonio Villas Boas and Linda Neopolitano/Cortille; the five most interesting cases: Father Gill, the Belgian Triangles, Trinidad Island, Travis Walton and



the Giant Yukon Saucer. There are examples of UFO reports from the various continents, and about half the book is taken up with an A-Z of ufology.

Looking through this, except for changing the odd case or other, there is next to nothing that couldn't have been written ten years ago, very little that couldn't have been written twenty years ago, kick out Roswell and the wilder fringes of the abduction tales and much could have been written thirty years ago, and sizeable portions could have been written forty years ago when MUFOB first started.

Ufology, like cryptozoology and parapsychology is a subject that never really moves forward. From time to time there are new 'phenomena' or new motifs to the tales told, but there is never anything that leads to resolution. 'Investigations' hailed as groundbreaking turn out to be naive, the sensible authorities turn out to be not that sensible.

Some ufologists like Jerome Clark have come to accept that much of the UFO experience come from what for want of a better term can be called the world of virtual experience, but insist that there is inner core of hard cases and physical evidence which are of a different nature. The problem is that cryptozoologists and psychical researchers say the same. Cryptozoologists, like ufologists, have their ambiguous marks on the ground and controversial photographs; psychical researchers have their stories of electrical malfunctioning, dramatic physical effects, EVPs and 'spirit photographs' by the score. None of these offer any conclusive evidence which would persuade the non-believer, no-one comes up with the really alien tissue sample, the manufactured object made out of element

150, the Bigfoot road kill, the mathematical cross-correspondence or the persistent paranormal object. The evidence is always only evidence when viewed through the eyes of faith. Does anyone ever seriously, really, *really* think that any of this is going to change? Equally the chances of some grand final refutation which will exorcise all the Fortean weirdness is just as remote.

The virtual world of the goblin universe which inhabits the liminal zone between dream and waking, imagination and reality is probably a lot stranger than any collection of Fortean would have us believe. The stories and experiences collected by ufologists, cryptozoologists and psychical researchers are merely the socially and culturally acceptable tips of a vast of ocean of weirdness out there.

So ufology, cryptozoology and psychical research will go on, but will never get anywhere, because Magonia is not some quasi physical/geographical location from which aliens, bogbarts and ghosts come forth but is

ultimately grounded in the human imagination through which we organise the chaos of sensory information into a coherent narrative of the world.

**C. G. Jung. *Psychology and the Occult*. Routledge, 2008. £10.99**

A welcome reissue of Jung's papers on spiritualism and ghost stories, from his earlier, rather sceptical, clinical pieces to his much more believing later work. The earlier pieces are actually the ones which seem to have stood the test of time rather better, because they are not entangled with his later speculations about the collective unconscious and his forays into Gnosticism.

His earliest piece 'On the Psychology and Pathology of So-called occult Phenomena' dating from 1902 deals mainly with his investigation of a teenage medium, who (though it is not disclosed in his text) was some sort of cousin. Much of the discussion is in terms of somnambulism, hysteria and the like, and deals with concepts and 'symptoms' which are rarely seen in psychiatric literature these days. Miss X came from a family with a range

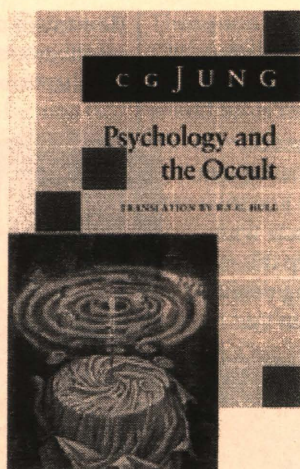
of odd behaviours and experiences, Jung's use of terms like 'bad antecedents' warns us that this was the age which would sport eugenics and much worse. *Magonia* readers may like to draw the parallels with modern stories of cross generational abductees and the like.

The parallels are even more marked, when we find that she, like the notorious Helene Smith, had journeys to Mars and encounters with star people. These star people and

Martians are like greys "they have no godlike souls as men have, they pursue no science, no philosophy, but in the technical arts they are far more advanced than we are". Normally they are nothing like humans, but if they approach too close to the earth, and must take on human bodies ... as human beings they are cold, hard hearted and cruel" [like her mother P.R.]. She can recognise them by their peculiar expression that lacks the spiritual, and by "their hairless, eyebrowless, sharply cut faces." Napoleon was a typical star dweller.

So there you are, quite a sizeable chunk of the modern abduction mythos is already present in the mind of an attention seeking 15 year old schoolgirl in about 1899. One can't help notice the influence of *War of the Worlds* written in 1898, and contemporary stories of Martians and Martian canals.

The second piece "On Spiritualistic Phenomena" is a generally agnostic discussion, showing Jung already appreciated the problems of eyewitness testimony and 'trained



witnesses': "All human beings are bad observers of things that are unfamiliar to them. [The physicist William] Crookes is a human being ... Take a sensitive observer away from his microscope and turn his attention to wind and weather and he is more helpless than any hunter or peasant. If we plump a good physicist down in deceptive, magical darkness of a spiritualist séance, with hysterical mediums plying their trade with all the

incredible refinement, many of them have at their command, his observation will be no more acute than a layman's".

Jung later became much less sceptical of séance room phenomena and parapsychology in general, even endorsing, for a time at least, the spiritualistic writings of Stewart White, though Jung tended still to hedge his bets.

**Rob Simone. *UFOs in the Headlines: Real Reporting on a Real Phenomenon*. Headroom Publishing, 2008. £19.50**

The core of this book is a major nostalgia fest, a large collection of UFO stories from British newspapers covering the period 1950-1954. Here are the first UK news reports of loads of those old cases that ufologists of my age read in the old books we got from the public libraries: the Nash and Fortenberry Story, the Nairobi cigar, the Topcliffe Saucer, Captain Howard and BOAC Stratocruiser, the story of Mr Potter and his "Adamski type saucer", the Darbyshire photograph, and UK press reaction to the great French wave of 1954 (early versions of the story of Marius Dewilde etc).

The coverage contains about equal measure of "believer" and sceptical material, most of the latter one must say being of a rather careless nature. Of course many of the actual UFO stories covered would receive fairly short shrift from today's more savvy ufologists; many are obvious meteorites for example.

The rest of the book is much weaker, being just odds and ends of clippings from the USA and elsewhere, with transcriptions, and in some cases, translations, by the author. It would have been a lot more interesting to have many more French clippings and translations from the 1954 wave, and the selection of un-translated material from Turkey serves little purpose.

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**These are the last book reviews that Peter Rogerson has done for the print version of Magonia. However, you will be able to keep abreast of the Fortean and ufological literary world in The Magonia Review of Books, which will be a regular feature of the new Magonia blog: [pelicanist.blogspot.com](http://pelicanist.blogspot.com)**

